

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY AND ADAPTATION ISSUES AMONG UKRAINIAN  
IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN SASKATCHEWAN

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the study was to examine the major linguistic and adaptation issues faced by Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan. Total number of 59 participants took part in this study. Among them were 30 children and youth who immigrated to Canada directly from Ukraine, 27 parents of the young immigrants, and 2 teachers who worked closely with Ukrainian immigrant students. The main challenges connected with the level of English proficiency of the immigrant children and youth were explored in the study. The children expressed their concerns and told about their experiences as for their life in Canada in the semi-structured interviews that were transcribed and analyzed for the study. Furthermore, during the statistical analysis of quantitative data collected from the parents questionnaire and the children's and youth's English proficiency test, comparison was made between responses of parents who were grouped according to the following demographic characteristics of their children: age, gender, duration of stay in Canada, age upon arrival in Canada, as well as ESL classes attendance, school choice, and level of English proficiency.

It was found that the most pressing issue for Ukrainian immigrant children and youth was their limited English proficiency that presented various difficulties in adjusting to Canada. Moreover, such factors as age, gender, choice of school, ESL classes attendance effected the process of second language acquisition and adaptation of the young immigrants.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1 Ukrainian immigrants in Canada**

Canada is one of the few countries that accepts a high number of immigrants and refugees. In recent years, the foreign-born population in the country has increased from 19.6% in 2006 to 21.9% in 2016 (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2017). Thus, one of the essential goals of Canadian society is to ensure the wellbeing and successful adaptation of these culturally diverse immigrant groups (Kirmayer et al., 2011). Providing a nurturing context to assist immigrants and refugees in finding their place in Canadian society may be achieved within the official policy of multiculturalism that ensures successful adaptation and coexistence of diverse groups in society and stands against prejudice and discrimination (Noels & Berry, 2016). Canada has become a new home to the 7, 540, 830 immigrants and refugees in 2016 (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2017). Ukraine is among the top-25 immigrant source countries in 2016 (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2017). The number of Ukrainian newcomers in Canada increased for 26.8% from 2001 to 2011 (51,610 in 2001 to 65,455 in 2011) (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016). Immigration from Ukraine to Canada started in the 1890s and continues to be a part of the current immigration trends (Kostyuk, 2007). The provinces with the highest numbers of immigrants from Ukraine are Ontario, British Columbia, Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016).

Out of the 18 million immigrants, who arrived in Canada during the 1990s, 17% (309, 700) were children and youth from 5 to 16 years old, including those with Ukrainian origin, who went through the process of relocation and adaptation with their parents (Statistics Canada, 2003). Previous studies conducted in countries with high numbers of immigrants show that immigrant children and youth experience multiple obstacles on their way to successful integration into the new society (Berry et al., 2006; Mendes, 2009; Stodolska, 2008). Mendes (2009) on Ukrainian and Russian immigrant children and youth in Portugal shows that they feel peer pressure at school, experience linguistic difficulties, and struggle to adjust to the new educational requirements. Proficiency in the majority language of the country was reported to influence the academic success of immigrant children and youth at schools in the USA



(Stodolska, 2008). Earlier research studies show that immigrant children and youth in Canada suffer from adaptation difficulties including the language barrier which affects multiple spheres of their life in a new country (Lee & Chen, 2000). In addition, because of their limited English proficiency, immigrant children and teens often experience more challenges to find new friends, as their peers in a host country already have well-established social networks (Schleifer & Ngo, 2005).

Since Ukrainian children and youth are part of the current immigrant body of Canada, it is important to investigate the issues that may influence their successful integration into Canadian society. Although it was noted that immigrant children and youth had difficulties with both learning a new language and adjusting to a new environment after their arrival in a host country (Berry et al., 2006; Jia et al., 2016), Ukrainian immigrant children and youth have not been sufficiently addressed in earlier research. Furthermore, most of the literature about Ukrainian immigrants concentrates on socioeconomic, sociolinguistic, and social factors that have an impact on sociocultural and psychological adaptation among adults (Kondrashov, 2007; Mouzitchka, 2006). Since the number of studies in the field of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth is limited, the question is whether the findings from research about adult immigrants' adaptation experiences can be applicable to the young Ukrainian newcomers in Canada.

Therefore, this study contributes to an in-depth understanding of the main challenges faced by Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan by examining the scope of problems in their adaptation pathways. The aim of this study is to obtain a dynamic picture of the issues connected with adaptation difficulties and the level of English proficiency of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan.

### **1.1.1 Stages of Ukrainian immigration to Canada**

Ukrainian immigration in Canada can be divided into four waves. The First Wave occurred between 1896 – 1914. During that time, approximately 170,000 Ukrainians settled in prairie lands of Canada (Luciuk, 2000). Because of the political and economical pressures of Austro-Hungarian regime in the western part of Ukraine and of the Russian policy in the Eastern Ukraine, many peasants decided to emigrate to Canada with the hope to have their own land and better chances to make a living (Gerus & Rea, 1985).

The First Wave of Ukrainian immigration was supported by the Liberal Government of Canada (Gerus & Rea, 1985). Nevertheless, the first flow of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada faced multiple obstacles and adaptation difficulties in the new country (Luciuk, 2000). The majority of Ukrainian immigrants inhabited “the rock-strewn Stuartburn area of south-eastern Manitoba through the scrub lands of the Interlake to the Yorkton-Saskatoon district and along the Valley of the North Saskatchewan to Vegreville, east of Edmonton” (Gerus & Rea, 1985, p. 7). Newly-arrived Ukrainians were described as mostly illiterate agrarians who stood out with their language, culture, and religious identities and significantly differed from the rest of the Canadian population (Swyripa, 1978). Unable to assimilate immediately, “Slavs typified the potential danger of the new migration in the perception of the British majority. The distinctiveness of the Ukrainians – in dress, culinary habits and especially in language and religion – was both threat and challenge to the host society” (Gerus & Rea, 1985, p. 9). In most cases, those Ukrainian immigrants who worked hard on their homesteads could support themselves, despite all the hardships of adaptation (Woodsworth, 1972).

The beginning of the First World War cut off overseas immigration, decreasing the flow of immigrants from Ukraine to Canada. Immigration resumed after WW I, and this Second Wave of Ukrainian immigration brought 70,000 Ukrainians to Canada between 1918 and 1939 (Luciuk, 2000). During the Great Depression in the 1930s, Ukrainians faced job discrimination and poverty; the ones who were unskilled and could not speak English were effected the strongest (Gerus & Rea, 1985). Due to unemployment and poverty, many Ukrainians joined different left-wing organizations and social protest movements (Gerus & Rea, 1985). By the 1940s, the situation of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada improved, and they started to promote their cultural heritage through various organizations, clubs, and groups. The outbreak of the Second World War terminated the acceptance of the new immigrants to Canada (Kaye & Swyripa, 1982).

The Third Wave of Ukrainian immigration began after 1945 and ended in 1952. The number of newcomers significantly declined comparatively to previous waves of Ukrainian immigration. Only 32,000 Ukrainians arrived in Canada by 1952; this group mainly consisted of political refugees and individuals displaced during the Second World War (Gerus & Rea, 1985). The immigrants of this wave tended to adapt faster to a new society, as they had no opportunity to go back home and held strong political views against the Soviet regime (Kaye & Swyripa, 1982).

The Fourth Wave of Ukrainian immigration started after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and continues today (Isajiw, Satzewich & Duvalko, 2003). In contrast to the previous three waves of Ukrainian immigration, the Fourth Wave newcomers from Ukraine are educated and professionally skilled, and this assists with their integration into Canadian economy (Isajiw, Satzewich & Duvalko, 2002). Moreover, they tend to settle in urban centres rather than in rural areas (Kostyuk, 2007). The availability of Ukrainian institutions allows recent Ukrainian immigrants to integrate into Canadian society faster, since they get additional support in Ukrainian churches and community establishments (Isajiw, 2010).

Throughout the years, Ukrainian immigrants established a strong ethnocultural community in Canada. Thanks to the contributions of generations of immigrants from Ukraine, Ukrainian cultural heritage is well-preserved and supported in Canada (Isajiw, 2010). Support from the diaspora significantly helps new Ukrainian immigrants during their adaptation after their arrival to the new country. According to Baczynskyi (2009), Ukrainian-Canadians have established one of the largest ethnospecific organizations in Canada that includes schools, churches, cultural and educational institutions. A study by Kostyuk (2007) in Saskatchewan shows that many Ukrainian immigrants are attracted to Canada by the existence of the Ukrainian-Canadian population.

The Fourth Wave of Ukrainian immigration provides a stable inflow of immigrants, where approximately 2,000 to 3,000 permanent residents from Ukraine land in Canada every year (The Canadian Magazine of Immigration, 2016). As Ukrainian immigration to Canada continues, it is important to understand how Ukrainian families feel about the relocation, new language, schools, and friends, as well as to address the most important issues that hinder their successful adjustment in Canada. A study by Kondrashov (2007) shows that recent Ukrainian immigrants in Canada face multiple adaptation issues of personal and social character during the first years after immigration. In particular, they experience isolation, occupational discrimination, as well as a language barrier while adjusting in the new country (Kondrashov, 2007). However, only very few studies were conducted that focused on Ukrainian immigrants in recent years (Kondrashov, 2007; Mouzitchka, 2006). Even less attention was paid to Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in earlier research on the contemporary Ukrainian diaspora in Canada (Baczynskyj, 2009; Chumak-Horbatsch & Garg, 2006). Little is known about how young Ukrainian immigrants learn to adapt to their new life in Canada, what their academic success is, how well they manage to learn

English, and what difficulties they experience. As was reported in the previous research, immigrant children and youth face multiple difficulties at school, where their academic performance was hindered because of poor communicative competence in a target language (Stodolska, 2008). Thus, in-depth research is needed to address the important questions about adaptation difficulties and language problems of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth. These research results may help them to overcome the issues they can face after arrival to Canada and to integrate successfully into the new society.

## 1.2 Adaptation

Research on adaptation and cultural adjustment among immigrants and other diverse groups has been characterized by a lack of consistency across studies on definitions of the key constructs and by discordant theoretical frameworks (Searle & Ward, 1990). Numerous studies have been conducted in Canadian contexts to address immigrants' adaptation and investigate various difficulties faced by immigrants (e.g., Aycan & Berry, 1995; Aycan & Berry, 1996; Berry & Sam, 1996, Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Searle, 1991; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Berry (1997) defines adaptation as “changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands. These adaptations can occur immediately, or they can be extended over the longer term” (p. 13). The same phenomenon is described as an ability to “fit in” in the new environment and successfully manage everyday situations in a dominant culture by Searle and Ward (1990, p. 450).

Two domains of adaptation are identified: psychological and sociocultural (Searle & Ward, 1990). *Psychological adaptation* is described as “feelings of well-being and satisfaction”, the positive emotional state as a result of personal achievements in a new cultural environment (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450). *Sociocultural adaptation* refers to the ability of an individual to cope with external problems in a new society (Searle & Ward, 1990, p. 450). Earlier studies establish that sociocultural adaptation is influenced by such factors as the “length of residence in a new culture, cultural knowledge, amount of interaction and identification with host nationals, cultural distance, language fluency and acculturation strategies” (Ward & Kennedy, 1999, p. 661). Moreover, according to Ward (1996), psychological adaptation is associated with stress and ability to cope with it in a new environment, and sociocultural adaptation refers to social skills of an individual and culture learning framework.

An investigation of psychological and sociocultural adaptation shows that they are both interrelated and, at the same time, conceptually different (Searle & Ward, 1990). Psychological and sociocultural adaptation are differentiated, as they are predicted by different sets of factors and have distinctive time courses (Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Berry (1997) states that “psychological problems often increase soon after contact, followed by a general (but variable) decrease over time; sociocultural adaptation, however, has a linear improvement with time” (p. 20). Furthermore, psychological adaptation is predicted by variables connected with personality, social support, and life changes, while sociocultural adaptation is influenced by cultural distance, time spent in the host culture, social contact with the host nationals, and cultural competence regarding the dominant culture (Ward & Kennedy, 1994; Wilson, Ward, & Fischer, 2013). Psychological adaptation can be measured within the scope of psychopathology and stress, whereas sociocultural adaptation can be analyzed within the social skills framework and the ability of an individual to coexist within the new cultural environment (Berry, 1997).

### **1.2.1 Adaptation and acculturation**

Another important term used in adaptation theory is acculturation. Acculturation is analyzed at the level of individuals rather than social groups (Ataca & Berry, 2002). This phenomenon is defined as “changes in an individual who is a participant in a culture-contact situation - a person who is being influenced by the external culture and by the changing culture of which the individual is a member” (Berry, 2003, p. 19). Berry (1997) considers adaptation as a part of the acculturation process, where adaptation is described as an outcome and the final stage of acculturation that happens over a certain period of time (p. 15).

Acculturation can be classified as unidimensional and bidimensional (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Berry, Kim, Power, Young, & Bujaki, 1989; Gordon, 1964; Triandis, Kashima, Shimada, & Villareal, 1988). A unidimensional model is described as “a change in cultural identity that takes place along a single continuum over the course of time” (Ryder, Alden & Paulhus, 2000, p. 49). Within a bidimensional model “acculturation can be more completely understood when heritage and mainstream cultural identities are seen as being relatively independent of one another” (Ryder, Alden & Paulhus, 2000, p. 49).

However, the unidimensional model of acculturation has its shortcomings, as the choice of an individual is limited between identification with heritage culture at the one end of a

continuum and identification with the mainstream culture at the other end. Thus, the instruments of the unidimensional model exclude potential choices of a bicultural individual to be identified with both heritage culture and the host culture at the same time or with either of the above (Mavreas, Bebbington, & Der, 1989). In contrast, Berry et al. (1987) propose the bidimensional model of acculturation that is based on two dimensions and considered to be more inclusive than the unidimensional one. Within the bidimensional model, it is possible to distinguish an individual with multiple cultural identities and provide a complete picture of acculturation utilizing the bidimensional instruments (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

Based on the bicultural model of acculturation, Berry and et al. (1987) propose four strategies of individual acculturation: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Those individuals who follow integration strategy choose to preserve their original culture, but at the same time are involved in the dominant community. The assimilation strategy assumes relatively exclusive participation in the dominant ethnic community replacing the involvement in the original culture. The separation strategy predicts almost exclusive involvement in the native ethnic community excluding the interaction with the mainstream society. The marginalization strategy is adopted by an individual when the rejection of both the original and mainstream cultures happens that also called deculturation (Berry, 1997, p. 9).

However, Rudmin (2003) do not support the idea that an individual can be consciously isolated from both cultures at the same time. Thus, he proposes an alternative definition to the marginalization strategy. He suggests that an individual can reject the culture of origin or the mainstream culture, while the strategy of multiculturalism can be adopted, which is defined as involvement with a third cultural group rather than giving preference to the culture of origin or the mainstream culture (Rudmin, 2003). Although the acculturation model of Berry et al. (1987) is assumed to be credible according to the psychometric analysis (Ward & Kennedy, 1994), the methodological approaches of the model are criticized by some researchers (e.g., Rudmin, 1996, 2003; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). Rudmin (2003) criticizes the acculturation paradigm for its excessive concentration on minorities, as well as the acculturation model is based on incorrect statistic analysis. According to Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999), the scales used in Berry et al.'s (1987) acculturation model, are limited and do not cover all the phenomena that exist within the four acculturation strategies.

Despite the criticism, the connection between acculturation strategies and adaptation is found in some previous studies (Berry, 2005; Ward & Kennedy, 1994). Research shows considerable influence of acculturation strategies on adaptation outcomes, where integration is reviewed as the most adaptive strategy and marginalization is the least adaptive one:

Acculturation strategies have been shown to have substantial relationships with positive adaptation: integration is usually the most successful; marginalization is the least; and assimilation and separation strategies are intermediate. This pattern has been found in virtually every study and is present for all types of acculturating groups” (Berry, 1997, p. 24).

Additionally, in the study of Irish immigrants in London, Curran (2003) finds that those immigrants who choose an integration strategy feel better adjusted than those who follow other acculturation strategies, including the marginalization strategy, which appears to be the least adaptive. Ward and Kennedy (1994) state that the choice of the acculturative strategies has impact on psychological and sociocultural adaptation. In particular, those individuals who follow an integration strategy have less psychological stress and experience better psychological adaptation in comparison to those who adopt an assimilation strategy. Moreover, those individuals who choose a separation or marginalization strategy face more social challenges in their sociocultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1994). In contrast, those participants who pursue either an integration or assimilation strategy encounter fewer problems regarding sociocultural adaptation (Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

Since this study focuses on the adaptation issues experienced by Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Canada, it should be noted that young immigrants are affected by the same choice of acculturation strategies and adaptation outcomes as adult immigrants (Berry, 1997). In the study of immigrant youth settled in 13 countries, Berry et al. (2006) find a significant relationship between the acculturation and adaptation of the participants. Those participants who follow an integration strategy and have balanced identification with both the culture of origin and the dominant culture show the best results in their psychological and sociocultural adaptation, whereby the youth who are not sure about any of the acculturation strategies and their place in the society have the worst psychological and sociocultural adaptation outcomes (Berry et al., 2006). Similarly, a study of Vietnamese immigrant youths in the USA shows the link between an integration strategy and adjustment (Nguyen, Messe, & Stollak, 1999). Those participants who are involved in the U.S. culture have positive adjustment experience, and those who are mainly

involved in the Vietnamese culture have negative personal adjustment experience that is related to psychological distress (Nguyen, Messe, & Stollak, 1999). However, it is worth to note that within the bidimensional model of acculturation such factors as cultural identity and orientation, language use (national and ethnic), social interaction with peers, family attitudes and relationship with parents, neighborhoods can influence the choice of acculturation strategies among immigrant youth (Berry et al., 2006).

According to the reviewed literature, it is possible to conclude that more distinctions between home and host countries negatively influence psychological and sociocultural adaptation of immigrants (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1992), while minimal cultural differences, better understanding of the host culture, and employment of good acculturation strategies, facilitate faster adaptation in the dominant culture (Berry, 1997).

### **1.3 Major factors influencing individual acculturation and adaptation**

For a better understanding of the acculturation and adaptation processes among immigrants, various factors that influence these two processes have to be identified (e.g. Beiser et al., 1998; Berry, 1997, 2006; Carballo, 1994; Guzel, 2016; Ward & Kennedy, 1993, 1999). Berry (1997) suggests two groups of factors effected the acculturation stress and adaptation of individuals: factors existing prior to acculturation and factors arising during acculturation itself. Before adapting to a new culture and environment, an individual has specific social and demographic characteristics that may affect the acculturation process (Berry, 1997). Age, gender, education, migration motivation and expectations, cultural distance, and personal characteristics can have an impact on the acculturation of an individual (Berry, 1997, pp. 21-23). Issues of social relationships and support, a new language, societal attitudes, coping and acculturation strategies also arise during acculturation (Berry, 1997, pp. 23-25).

One of the most important factors related to a person's acculturation and adaptation is language. The ability to communicate in a new society is related to the adaptation process of an individual in a new country (Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Ward & Kennedy (1999) suggest that interaction and adaptation are tightly connected with each other, and the individual adaptation process happens through communication and interaction in a new country. Additionally, Ward & Kennedy (1999) state that adaptation is associated with the amount of time the individual interacted in a new environment or culture. Depending on the amount of



interaction the individual is exposed to, as well as on the level of language proficiency, he or she adapts his or her behaviour to the new environment (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). According to the longitudinal study of Xue (2007), immigrants in Canada lacking in English or French proficiency, experience more psychological stress even after four years of living in their new home country. Insufficient language proficiency impedes socialization and communication, and this compromises the emotional and psychological state of an individual (Xue, 2007). Consequently, language proficiency has significant impact on the adaptation and acculturation process in a new country (Culhane, 2004; Xue, 2007).

Age and gender also play an important role in the adaptation and acculturation process (Beiser, Barwick, & Berry, 1988; Berry et al., 2006; Carballo, 1994, Stiefel, Schwartz, & Conger, 2010). Younger individuals have a smoother path to adaptation and acculturation in a new environment (Beiser, Barwick, & Berry, 1988). Gender is also shown to effect adaptation and acculturation (Berry et al., 2006; Carballo, 1994). Carballo (1994) finds that females experience more acculturation problems than males. A study by Berry et al. (2006) on the adaptation and acculturation of immigrant youth shows that “psychological adaptation was weakly but significantly related to gender, with immigrant boys having a slightly better psychological adaptation score than immigrant girls. Immigrant boys scored lower on sociocultural adaptation compared to immigrant girls” (Berry et al., 2006, p. 319).

Various cultures have distinct traditions and norms, therefore an individual immersed into the culture that significantly differs from his or her own may feel uncomfortable in adjustment to the cultural and religious norms of a new country (Berry, 1997). In a study focusing on international and domestic students in the USA, Guzel (2016) suggests that students’ cultural background and cultural differences influence an individual acculturation and the level of acculturative stress a student may have in a new country. Other studies also suggest that it can be more difficult for a newcomer to adapt to a new environment if a culture of a host country is significantly different from the one in a home country (Ward & Kennedy, 1993; Berry, 2005).

To conclude, there are multiple factors that may lead to or prevent successful adaptation in a new environment after immigration. Among the major are language, culture, personal characteristics, etc. (Berry, 1997; Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Analyzing and identifying these factors in detail may contribute to a better understanding of the major challenges that appear during the adaptation process in a new country.

#### **1.4 Second language proficiency and adaptation issues among immigrant children and youth**

As suggested in earlier research, arriving in a new country, immigrant children and youth encounter various obstacles on their way to successful adaptation (Stodolska, 2008; Yen et al., 2003). Multiple studies of young immigrants conducted in different countries report that immigrant children and youth tend to develop fears, anxiety, aggression, learning difficulties, low self esteem, and identity problems (Ashworth, 1975; Gaertner-Harnach, 1981). They also experience the challenges of learning the new language, adapting to the new school system, and reestablishing their relationships with family members and friends after relocation to a new country (Stodolska, 2008). Moreover, in the study of Japanese immigrant youth in the United States, Yen et al. finds that the young immigrants experience racism and prejudice, language barriers, identity and values conflict, and multiple cultural challenges (Yen et al., 2003).

Language barrier is one of the most pressing issues encountered by immigrant children and youth during the adaptation process in a new country (Lee & Chen, 2000). The majority language is seen as an important mechanism that unites people with different cultural backgrounds (Kim, 1997), and provides representatives of different ethnolinguistic communities with an opportunity to interact with each other (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005). A study by Yu et al., (2003) shows that immigrant youth residing in the United States, who speak their native language on everyday basis at home and do not communicate in English, are at risk of developing low self-confidence and of estrangement from peers. Thus, the ability to communicate in a majority language is directly related to more interaction with the representatives of an adopted culture (Ward & Kennedy, 1994).

Previous studies show the link between immigrants' language proficiency and psychological and sociocultural adaptation (e.g. Andrade, 2006; Gonzales, 2006; McKay-Semmler & Kim, 2014). Andrade (2006) suggests that low English proficiency is the main factor that negatively influences sociocultural adaptation and academic achievements of international students. Similarly, because of low English proficiency, international graduate students have challenges in their academic life, in their engagement with a new culture, and in socializing with native speakers (Gonzales, 2006). Ward & Kennedy (1994) state that communication competence helps to build interpersonal relationships and establish social support that promotes faster adaptation and acculturation. The study by McKay-Semmler & Kim (2014) of Hispanic immigrant youth in the United States shows that participants with a higher level of English

proficiency are more actively engaged in interpersonal communication, have better psychological health, as well as better functional fitness in the society.

Multiple studies reveal the connection between communication competence in the target language and psychological well-being of young immigrants. A research study by Roberts & Chen (1995) shows the relationship between low level of English proficiency and a higher risk of depression in immigrant youth, whereas young immigrants with good host communicative competence have higher self-worth and self-esteem (Perez, 2011; Portes & Zady, 2002).

Moreover, the level of language proficiency has a significant influence on a child's and adolescent's academic life (Portes, 1999). Collier (1987) argues that an inability to understand the subject material may lead to a gap in knowledge and poor academic performance:

By the time they [students] had acquired enough proficiency in English to receive meaningful instruction in content-area classes, they had in the mean time lost 2-3 years of... content knowledge in mathematics, science, and social studies at their age-grade level. This puts them significantly behind in mastery of the complex material required for high school students. (p. 633).

Immigrant children and youth who experience interruption in their education face even more challenges (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). They have to learn the target language of a host country, and at the same time have to grasp new subject material during their regular classes, while the young immigrants are measured by the same standards as the native-born students in the class (Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007, p.1). Consequently, immigrant children with limited proficiency in their second language have lower grades and worse academic performance than native-speaking children in school (Thompson et al. 2002).

#### **1.4.1 Factors influencing second language acquisition of immigrant children and youth**

There are multiple factors influencing second language acquisition among immigrant children and youth (McDonald, 2000; Montrul, 2008; Moyer, 1999). Age at arrival, length of stay in a host country, individual factors, second language input, etc. play a significant role in an immigrant's second language attainment (Jia, Aaronson, & Wu, 2002; Moyer, 1999, 2004; Stevens, 2015). A study by Stevens (2015) shows that the longer an immigrant child lives in a host country, the better his or her language skills become. In addition, age at arrival is crucial for the level of English proficiency of immigrant children: those who are older arriving to the USA have a slower process of English acquisition.

Furthermore, the notion of “critical period” should be reviewed when measuring the effects of age on the level of English proficiency of immigrant children and youth (Long, 2013). The “Critical Period Hypothesis” is connected with maturation constraints that influence the process of language acquisition (Kim, Relkin, & Lee, 1997). The maturation constraints related to language acquisition imply that the ability of an individual to acquire such aspects as grammar, phonetics, and syntax in a language declines with age (Lenneberg, 1967). As for a second language acquisition, according to the hypothesis, the developmental period during which a child starts to learn a language influences the ability to be proficient on a native-like level in a second language (Johnson & Newport, 1989). Scovel (1998, 2006) claims that L2 learners are not able to acquire a native-like level of proficiency (particularly in phonology) after a certain maturation point.

Different scholars argue about the precise measures of critical period and the age boundary of successful second language acquisition (Lenneberg, 1967; Penfield & Roberts, 1959; Snow, 1993). For instance, Penfield and Roberts (1959) propose that the offset point for “critical period” and learning a new language is the age of nine; and after that period “brain becomes progressively stiff” (p. 255). Another example is Lenneberg (1967) and his suggestion that after puberty it is harder to acquire a foreign language and eliminate an accent. Similarly, Long (2013) addressing the adult immigrant population shows a correlation between the age of exposure to a second language and the level of English proficiency. The older learners are less proficient in a second language than those who are exposed to the language in the young age irrespective of time spent in a native-like environment (Long, 2013).

In contrast to the studies highlighted above, Snow (1993) suggests that an older child can learn a second language much faster than the younger one, because the older children have more developed cognitive skills that contributes to better second language acquisition. Compared to native speakers, the older immigrant youth may never have the same proficiency level in their second language, nevertheless, their advanced language skills upon arrival may help them to become proficient on a minimal level much faster than children of younger age (Collier, 1987). According to the studies that examine large samples of pre-school and elementary-school students, children of 8 to 11 years old become proficient in their second language faster than those who are 5 to 7 years old (Cummins, 1981; Ramsey & Wright, 1974).

Thus, disagreement among researchers questions the validity of “The Critical Period Hypothesis” and make it impossible to identify the exact offset point of critical period and the optimal age for second language acquisition (Birdsong, 1999; Thompson, 2001). Arguing about critical period for second language acquisition, Thompson (2001) makes the conclusion that “the complexity of the behavioral systems to which these concepts are applied in young children makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify the parameters of sensitive periods with appropriate specificity” (p. 87). While reviewing the theories addressing the second language acquisition and critical period, Birdsong (1999) concludes that the maturation constraints as for the language abilities do exist in second language acquisition, but they are gradual and do not constitute a precise age boundary. In sum, it seems that the critical period hypothesis remains an open topic for further research and theoretical debates.

However, age is not the only factor that influences the level of proficiency in L2 attainment. According to a study by McDonald (2000), a major factor is the degree of distance between L1 and L2. Spanish-speaking children that participated in the study and those, who started to learn English before the age of five, showed results on the level of native speakers on an English grammatically judgement test (McDonald, 2000). In contrast, Vietnamese-English bilingual children, who started to learn English at the same age, did not show the native-like English proficiency on the same test (McDonald, 2000).

In addition, the level of language proficiency and the time needed for second language acquisition are largely determined by the amount and quality of language exposure an immigrant child or adolescent have after arrival to a new country, while the amount of English input also differs depending on an immigrant child’s surrounding (Indefrey, 2006). Younger immigrant children that have adequate exposure to English mainly at schools they are enrolled into, whereas youth have more freedom to be outside of home and spend more time with their peers. Moreover, type of school, language used at home, and density of ethnic community predetermine how fast a child and adolescent acquired English and what proficiency level he or she would have during the first years after immigration (Hakuta, Bialystok & Wiley, 2003).

Previous studies prove that schools vary in the quality of English instruction offered to students, and some schools separate ESL learners and regular students with full English proficiency (Gershberg et al., 2004; Van Hook & Fix, 2000). Montrul (2008) suggests that besides the age and influence of critical period, such factors as “biological age, cognitive

development, degree of first and second language proficiency, amount of first and second language” input should also be considered in second language attainment (p.8).

Immersion into an L2 environment and communication with native speakers has a positive effect on a learner’s pronunciation and L2 attainment overall (Kinsella, 2009; Marinova-Todd, 2003). Marinova-Todd (2003) finds that among 30 post-pubertal participants from 25 different countries, the most proficient learners of English are those who live with native speakers of L2. In addition, the study by Kinsella (2009) proves that those participants who are married to native speakers and immersed in the L2 language at home and at work on a regular basis show the highest proficiency in French among 20 participants who are native speakers of English but use French as their L2.

To sum, multiple studies show that various factors influence language attainment among immigrant children and youth (Jia, Aaronson, & Wu, 2002; Long, 2013; Montrul, 2008; Moyer, 1999; Moyer, 2004). Although age is one of the important factors that affects a second language acquisitions, there is no precise evidence as for the age boundaries of a critical period (Birdsong, 1999, Moyer, 2004). Moreover, the speed and quality of second language acquisition and level of language proficiency among younger and older immigrant children can depend on different factors at certain ages, as well as on personal characteristics a child or adolescent possess, and environmental processes an immigrant child or adolescent is immersed into (Montrul, 2008).

### **1.5 Rationale of the study**

With the increased numbers of immigrants and refugees around the world, multiple research studies are focused on the connection between proficiency in the language of the host country and adaptation to a new country among newcomers (Andrade, 2006; Aycan & Berry, 1996). These studies address linguistic, socioeconomic, sociolinguistic, and social factors that impact adaptation process among adults. However, so far, little attention has been paid to immigrant youth and children who had various difficulties with learning a new language and adjustment to a new environment after immigration (Berry et al., 2006; Jia et al., 2016).

Furthermore, there are no studies addressing the English language proficiency and adaptation issues among Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan, even though Ukrainian immigrants constitute a significant part of population in Saskatchewan (Statistics Canada, 2016). Most of the studies regarding Ukrainians in Saskatchewan cover such areas, as

Ukrainian ethnicity, first language and culture maintenance (Denis, 1998; Hudyma, 2016; Klymasz, 1983; Kordan, 2000), as well as the experience of adult Ukrainian immigrants in the prairies (Kostyuk, 2007; Lehr, 1991).

Therefore, this study focuses on the connection between English language proficiency of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth on the one hand and their process of adaptation to the new environment on the other hand, as well as the role of age, gender, length of stay, and language exposure in this process.

The main objectives of the research are:

- describing the connection between English proficiency increase and adaptation of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan;
- identifying a range of difficulties related to the level of English proficiency faced by Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan;
- examining factors that contribute to successful adaptation of young Ukrainian immigrants in Saskatchewan.

The research questions are:

- What challenges related to the level of English proficiency do Ukrainian children and youth experience in the new country?
- Is there a connection between the level of English proficiency and the adaptation success of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan?
- Do the factors of age, gender, English skills, choice of school, length of stay in Canada, ESL classes attendance, etc. contribute to the successful adaptation of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan?

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

Mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed in the study: a questionnaire administered to parents about the adaptation process and level of English proficiency of their children, English proficiency assessments of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth, interviews with Ukrainian children and youth about their English proficiency and adaptation difficulties, and interviews with an ESL and a regular teacher who have taught Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Canada. The methods and procedures are described in the following sections.

### **2.1 Data collection**

#### **2.1.1 Questionnaire administered to parents**

As previous studies showed, questionnaires addressing the language proficiency and adaptation helped to collect the necessary quantitative data and identify the key issues experienced by the immigrant children and youth during their adjustment in a new country (Felichiano, 2005; Jia et al., 2016; Harker, 2001; Stodolska, 2008). Furthermore, the questionnaire allows the researcher to collect a large amount of the quantitative data in a short period of time. Since the parents could provide additional information about their children's English skills and adaptation process after the immigration, the questionnaire for parents was designed by the researcher to help understand the child's English acquisition process during the adaptation in the new environment.

The questionnaire was designed to include four sections containing questions related to the level of English proficiency of the child or adolescent and the difficulties experienced by the child or adolescent during the adaptation to a new country (Appendix A). A variety of questions focused on the children's and adolescents' level of English proficiency and its impact on adaptation.

The questionnaire contained 15 open-ended and 23 closed-ended questions. The open-ended format of questions allowed parents to express their opinions in regard to various difficulties experienced by their children and to make their suggestions about the ways of



facilitating the young immigrants' adjustment in the new environment. Closed-ended questions helped to gather quantitative data regarding English skills of immigrant children and youth.

The first section consisted of six demographic questions including the child's and adolescent's age, gender, school grade, length of stay in Canada, the parents' level of education, and their previous (in Ukraine) and current (in Canada) occupation. The second section contained a number of questions about language use at home, ESL classes attendance, and school choice, as well as parent's assessment of the child's or adolescent's level of English proficiency. The third section of the questionnaire included questions in the Likert scale format focused on the role of the child's English proficiency in his/her adaptation process and difficulties that the young participants might have experienced. In the fourth section, responders were asked five open-ended questions in order to learn their attitudes regarding their children's adaptation process.

Overall, the questionnaire contained 38 questions of different types. When the University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board approval # 16-398 was obtained, the questionnaire was translated into Ukrainian. One of the parents of every participating child was asked to fill out a questionnaire either in Ukrainian or in English.

### **2.1.2 English proficiency assessment**

For evaluation of the vocabulary and reading skills of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth, the Nation 2001 - Recognition test was selected as a tool since, according to Zahar et al. (2001), it allows measuring these skills at different levels. The test was downloaded from an internet source (Levels Test (Recognition), 2016) and comprised of 39 statements, where a respondent had to choose "True", "False", "I do not understand" options. This method of data collection helped to identify how well a child or adolescent understood the given vocabulary in the statements and comprehended information while reading them. The vocabulary and reading skills score were based on the number of correct answers given during the test. The test was printed on two double-sided pages and distributed among participants.

Listening skills can be assessed via administering a short audio text with follow-up listening comprehension questions (e.g., Goh, 2002; Lynch & Mendelsohn, 2009). Accordingly, a short audio text was selected from an internet source (Test your listening, 2016), and 14 follow-up question tasks were designed by the researcher to measure English listening skills of the participants (Appendix D). A child or adolescent was requested to listen to the audio text and

answer seven multiple-choice questions and choose seven True or False statements related to the information in the audio recording. The questions for the audio text were printed on one single-sided page. The evaluation of the listening skills was based on the number of correct answers to the questions. This method helped to collect the data on comprehension and listening skills of the participating immigrant children and youth.

To measure the speaking skills of children and youth, a picture-description task was employed. This method was used in the previous studies for measuring expressive oral language abilities and expressive vocabulary of the children and youth who learned foreign or second languages (e.g., Harley, 1992; Muñoz-Sandoval et al., 1998; Paez, 2009).

Two similar pictures with visual differences were offered to participants for description (Appendix E). The pictures were selected from an internet source (Preparation Tests, 2016) to evaluate the speaking skills of children and youth with different levels of English proficiency. Every speech sample was recorded and evaluated according to the 5-point scale, where 5 was “excellent”, 4 – “very good”, 3 – “good”, 2 – “satisfactory”, 1 – “minimal skills”. Every performance of a child in all three parameters was evaluated in accordance with a signed third-party agreement by an experienced ESL teacher, who has taught ESL students for more than six years and has a special certification in TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language). This strategy was employed to avoid any conflicts of interest and to get the accurate measurements of a child’s and adolescent’s English skills for further data analysis and reliable results of the study.

### **2.1.3 Interviews with children and youth**

Interviews were selected as a method of the study since similar procedures were employed in earlier research focusing on immigrant children and youth (Schwartz & Katzir, 2011, Stodolska, 2008, Yeh et al., 2003). This method allows to collect the data directly from the main group of informants: immigrant children and adolescents of different age, as well as from their teachers. While conducting the interviews, it was possible to clarify the child participant’s understanding of the interview questions and ask additional questions without missing any significant details. Recording the interviews allowed to obtain transcripts and analyze data in detail.

An open-ended face-to-face semi-structured interview consisting of 14 questions was used to identify the main challenges connected with level of English proficiency and adaptation

process of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth. The interview was conducted in the language (Ukrainian or English) chosen by the participant child or adolescent. The questions were printed on a letter-size page and read by the interviewer (Appendix B). The answers were digitally recorded with Zoom H2n Handy Recorder in MP 3 format.

To facilitate mutual understanding during the interview with a child or adolescent, the questions were arranged into four categories: *Personal information*, *Adaptation difficulties*, *English proficiency and its peculiarities*, *Language and adaptation*. In the first question category, participants were requested to provide demographic information (such as age, gender, length of stay in Canada, etc.). The second category was about the adaptation issues a child or adolescent encountered in Canada. The third and fourth categories elicited information about English proficiency level and adaptation issues of the children and youth in a new society and about the impact of language proficiency on their integration in a new country. Some of the questions in the child and adolescent interviews duplicated the entries in questionnaire for parents in order to compare the answers provided by children and youth and their parents.

In the course of the interview, additional questions were asked about schools the young immigrants attended. Since the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatoon had an option to attend Ukrainian bilingual school and regular Canadian schools, they were asked about their schooling experiences upon arrival to Canada. The Ukrainian bilingual school in Saskatoon had a partial immersion (bilingual) Ukrainian language program where multiple classes were taught in English and Ukrainian connecting the elements of culture and religious education.

#### **2.1.4 Interview with teachers**

A semi-structured face-to-face interview was conducted with one ESL teacher and one grade six teacher who taught Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Ukrainian bilingual school in Saskatoon. The interview consisted of 25 open-ended questions (Appendix C) and was divided into two sets of questions. The first part of the interview contained demographic questions, such as age, gender, level of education, occupation, number of languages spoken by a teacher. The second part addressed possible difficulties connected with teaching Ukrainian children and youth at school, such as language barrier, understanding a subject content, etc. The interview questions were designed to get better understanding of the main challenges among

Ukrainian children and youth at school with English acquisition and adaptation process after immigration.

## **2.2 Recruitment strategies**

The participating children and youth were recruited on voluntary basis via posters and flyers (Appendix I). The posters were placed in the local Ukrainian stores in Saskatoon, and flyers were distributed among Ukrainian customers. In addition, participants were also recruited via announcements and distribution of flyers in the Ukrainian bilingual school and churches. Prospective participants and their parents were asked to contact the researcher to set a time and place for a meeting for data collection.

The teachers were recruited personally by the researcher at the Ukrainian bilingual school in Saskatoon. The teachers were asked whether they wanted to participate in the study. If a teacher agreed to contribute his or her time for the interview, the time and location for the interview meeting were chosen.

## **2.3 Eligibility criteria**

The children and adolescents were selected according to the following criteria:

- 1) Ukrainian immigrant children and youth of 8 -14 years old who were born in Ukraine and have lived in Saskatchewan for at least six months or just relocated to the province directly from Ukraine;
- 2) the participant children and youth should not have attended any additional English courses before arriving to Canada apart from the regular classes offered by the previous school curriculum in Ukraine;
- 3) the participants had to reside in Saskatchewan permanently.

All the participating children and adolescents were divided into two groups according to their total duration of stay in Canada (including the length of stay in Saskatchewan): a) those who have resided in Canada for up to three years; b) those who have lived in Canada for more than three years. This strategy was employed to identify the increase in English proficiency and adjustment of a child and adolescent related to the length of stay in a new country. These criteria allowed to compare the level of English proficiency and characteristics of adaptation process and

to identify the main difficulties encountered by Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in both groups.

The main criteria for the teacher participants were an experience of working closely with Ukrainian immigrant children and youth teaching English as a second language or being a regular teacher at school and be familiar with the peculiarities of the Ukrainian children' and adolescents' academic adaptation.

## **2.4 Data analysis**

The qualitative data obtained from the thirty-two semi-structured interviews were analyzed and summarized to identify the main difficulties related to English proficiency and adaptation experiences that Ukrainian immigrant children and youth encountered after their relocation to Canada. The interviews with the participating children, adolescents, and teachers were carefully transcribed word-by-word. The interview transcripts were coded according to qualitative data coding procedures, where a single word or full sentence were chosen as a salient attribute of the data (Saldaña, 2015). Categorizing was the next step in the analysis where coded information with similar characteristics was grouped together according to thematic topics (Gibbs, 2007). These procedures allowed to elicit the right amount of data and perform an in-depth analysis of the transcripts. The text extracts that directly related to the description of English proficiency and adaptation issues among Ukrainian immigrant children and adolescents are presented and analyzed in the Results section 3.

When determining the level of English proficiency, an individual score for each given task (vocabulary and reading, speaking, and listening) was manually entered into Excel for further analysis. Also, an average language proficiency score for the three tasks was calculated for every participant and entered into Excel. The quantitative data from the questionnaires for parents, the participating children's and youth's test scores together with the social variables, such as age of the children, gender, length of stay in Canada, choice of school, and ESL classes attendance were organized in the table and analyzed in RStudio utilizing the ordinal regression function with "*ordinal*" package and "*clm*" function. Since most of the answers in the questionnaire were organized in the Likert-scale format, the analysis allowed to identify the main differences between the responses of different groups of parents considering their children' social variables and English proficiency scores.

## 2.5 Demographic characteristics of the participants

In total, 30 Ukrainian immigrant children and youth were interviewed and asked to complete the English proficiency tasks. The participants included 13 (43.3%) females and 17 (56.7%) males. All the participant children and youth were between 8 to 14 years old. They were divided into two age groups: a) 15 (50%) children from 8 to 10 years old (prepuberty age); b) 15 (50%) children and youth from 11 to 14 years old (approximate age of puberty).

**Table 2.1**

***Background information on participants (children and youth)***

<b><u>Variable</u></b>	<b><u>Number of participants</u></b>
<b>1. Gender</b>	
a) Females	<b>13</b>
b) Males	<b>17</b>
<b>2. Age</b>	
a) 8-10 y. o.	<b>15</b>
b) 11-14 y. o.	<b>15</b>
<b>3. Age of arrival</b>	
a) between 4 to 6 y. o.	<b>15</b>
b) between 7 to 14 y. o.	<b>15</b>
<b>4. School</b>	
a) Ukrainian bilingual school	<b>10</b>
b) Regular English-speaking school	<b>20</b>
<b>5. Stay in Canada</b>	
a) up to 3 years	<b>15</b>
b) more than 3 years	<b>15</b>

Age upon immigration was also considered in the analysis. There were 15 children who arrived in Canada between the ages of 4 and 6, and 15 participants - between 7 and 14. As was reported by the participants, 10 (33.3%) children out of 30 attended Ukrainian bilingual school. Majority of the participants (66.7%, n=20) went to the regular English-speaking schools.

In addition, two teachers were interviewed. Both teachers were from Ukrainian bilingual school where the concentration of Ukrainian immigrant children and adolescents was high compared to other schools in Saskatchewan. One of the teachers specializes in ESL and works directly with Ukrainian immigrant children and youth who have limited English proficiency upon arrival to Canada. The other teacher teaches grade six children in a class where approximately 2/3s of the students are Ukrainian immigrants.

The questionnaires were filled out by 27 parents (three of them were the parent of two siblings in the family). Twenty two (81.5%) out of 27 respondents were mothers, and five (18.5%) were fathers. All the families emigrated from Ukraine to Canada and reside in the province of Saskatchewan permanently when the data were collected. Most of the participating children and youth reside in Saskatoon (n=23), and some of them are from Yorkton (n=2), Lloydminster (n=4), and North Battleford (n=1). The participating families have lived in Canada from 2 months to 7 years. There were 15 children and adolescents have lived in Canada for up to 3 years and 15 children and adolescents who resided in Canada for more than 3 years.

## **2.6 Ethics approval**

The University of Saskatchewan Research Ethics Board approval # 16-398 to conduct the following research was obtained on November 10, 2016 and was extended to November 3, 2017. Every participant was informed of their rights including the right to confidentiality and to withdraw at any point of the research.

## **2.7 Consent and assent forms**

Before participating in the study, parents and teachers were given a consent form and were asked to sign the form if they agreed to participate (Appendix F, Appendix G). If parents did not understand some points in the form due to lack of English proficiency, the Ukrainian

version of the consent form was available, and further details were explained in Ukrainian by the researcher.

Children and adolescents were also asked to read an assent form and sign it indicating their agreement to participate in the study (Appendix H). If the child or adolescent had low English proficiency and could not understand the content of the form, the Ukrainian version of the assent form was available for the participants, and further details were explained in Ukrainian by the researcher. Every participant received a copy of consent or assent forms.



### 3. RESULTS

#### 3.1 English proficiency issues among Ukrainian immigrant children and youth

The interview transcripts of the immigrant children and adolescents were analysed to identify whether the participants reported any adaptation difficulties connected with the level of English proficiency. There were specific questions asked by a researcher during the interviews to identify the main problems regarding level of English proficiency and adaptation difficulties (Appendix B). The results of the analysis are summarized below in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1**  
**Difficulties faced by Ukrainian immigrant children and adolescents**

<b>Challenges experienced by the young immigrants</b>	<b>Number of children and adolescents facing the difficulty (out of 30)</b>
1. Inability to express oneself and speak English	26 (86.7%)
2. Communicating with peers and finding new friends	18 (60%)
3. Understanding the subject material at school	16 (53.3%)
4. Shyness and fear of making mistakes in English	9 (30%)
5. Translating the school material back and forth	5 (16.7%)
6. Adjustment to the cultural differences and Canadians' way of talking	4 (13.3%)

As Table 3.1 shows, almost all participants (86.7%) reported that they experienced the difficulty to express themselves in English and speak the majority language. More than half of the participants also had problems communicating with peers and finding new friends (60%), as

well as understanding the subject material at school (53.3%). Less common problems included “shyness and fear of making mistakes while speaking English” (30 %) and “translating the school material back and forth” (16.7%). The least frequent problem was “adjustment to the cultural differences and Canadians’ way of talking” (13.3%).

### **3.1.1 Inability to express yourself in English**

The most frequent problem (reported by 26 out of 30 children and youth in their interviews) was an inability to express themselves in English and speak the majority language after their arrival in Canada. As their level of English proficiency was very low, they could not express themselves properly, or even ask anything if they had some concerns. A ten-year-old girl commented:

It was really hard for me when I came because I didn’t know English at all and I didn’t really understand what the other people were talking around. The most difficult for me was speaking because sometimes I did not know how to say a word, and I just would hesitate.

Language serves as a bridge in experiencing the new culture, socializing with people, and participating in various everyday activities for the young immigrants. However, for those children and youth, who could not speak English, it became an obstacle on the way to their successful settlement in Canada. Despite many problems encountered by the young immigrants, the language barrier appeared to be the biggest difficulty for them. A fourteen-year-old teenager explained:

[It was difficult] Because it is their culture, surrounding, people, language, but the biggest problem, perhaps, was language because there is nothing in Ukrainian... everything is in English. And it is a bit hard, especially, I did not know English very well before, and the biggest difficulty is the language.

Although the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth had taken some English classes in Ukraine, they still were at the initial stages of the English language acquisition when arriving to Canada. As English was a crucial point in acquiring new knowledge and studying at school, in many cases, Ukrainian children and youth had to learn the language starting from the outset once they entered a school in Canada. A twelve-year-old student commented the situation in his school when he relocated to Canada:

I started talking to my teacher in Ukrainian, and she did not understand what I was saying.

A teacher from the Ukrainian Bilingual school mentioned:

[Ukrainian immigrant children and youth have] sort of very elementary, very basic [level of English proficiency]. And some don't even have any. Some, I guess, have taken English as a second language in Ukraine, but then when they come here, it's almost like they have started right up again at the beginning. There are not too many students who have any English coming from Ukraine and Russia. They'll understand the odd word, but if you are having the conversation, they can't carry the conversation.

Thus, inability to express themselves properly and lack of vocabulary had a great impact on the lives of the young Ukrainian immigrants. In many cases, they had to stay silent or use some words, which they learned at school while studying in Ukraine. However, they could not communicate properly and fully participate in any kind of activities that were in English. A teacher from Ukrainian bilingual school explained:

When they first come here? Or... I guess the first thing would be for them the vocabulary, lacking vocabulary. They have writing skills, which are transferred from Ukrainian to English, but it's not, you know, the writing skills in Ukraine, the conventions are a little bit different than ones here in Canada. They [children] can read and they can write, but in English not so much. And then it's vocabulary. When they are reading, they need their decoding skills.

As a result, many Ukrainian children and youth struggled to speak and understand English. Due to their limited English proficiency, the language barrier became the major issue for acculturation when Ukrainian immigrant children and youth arrived in Canada.

### **3.1.2 Communicating with peers and finding new friends**

The next major challenge for the young Ukrainian immigrants was establishing new social networks and finding friends in the new country. During the interview, 18 participants reported that it was difficult for them to make friends with other children and socialize with their peers. In many cases, the language barrier hindered their attempts to communicate and build a friendship. A ten-year-old interviewee explained:

I didn't know English really well and didn't communicate with other children too much. I even was afraid to approach them.

The participants reported that Canadian children and youth did not want to interact or play with them because Ukrainian immigrant children and adolescents did not understand English. Since the young Ukrainian immigrants could not speak the language or maintain the

conversation, their Canadian peers avoided socializing with them. A fourteen-year-old interviewee said:

Sometimes people didn't want to be friends with me. They did not say like they don't want to be friends, but they just stop communication with me. They just want to find out who I am and stop communicate with me until I learn English.

Another ten-year-old boy added:

I couldn't talk with them [Canadian children] normally. One day we played some game, and they did not understand what we need to do. I tried to explain it to them somehow.

As a result of miscommunication with Canadian children, Ukrainian children and youth tried to stick with other Ukrainian children if there were any in their surroundings during the initial stages of adjustment in Canada. In the Ukrainian bilingual school, there were more chances for the Ukrainian newcomers to make friendships and socialize with peers because many children there were originally from Ukraine and knew Ukrainian or Russian. A teacher from Ukrainian bilingual school commented:

They [Ukrainian children] tend to sort of stick together, but as they become more comfortable and the longer they are in class, they sort of all start to hang out together, and they all become friends, but at the beginning, it is really difficult as they are shy, and it is hard for them to communicate with the Canadian kids. As the years go on, they become as the one cohesive group.

Those participants, who lived in suburban areas and went to schools with few or no other immigrant students struggled through various challenges to adjust to the new environment. There were four participants out of 30 who reported that they were the only Ukrainian immigrant students in their schools. Canadian children were curious about newcomers from Ukraine and sometimes could not understand why a child from a different country could not speak their language. A ten-year-old girl commented:

Earlier, I did not understand them [my friends] at all. I just said "yes" or "no", or I either said I don't understand, because my dad told me that if you do not understand something, just say: "I don't understand". I just learned it that way. They [Canadian children] were like shocked, because the teacher said that she didn't really understand English, and then when I said that, they were just like shocked.

Thus, the newcomer Ukrainian children and youth did not know how to behave in this non-standard situation during the initial stages in the new country. They needed some time to

adjust to the new environment, learn the language, and find people who could support and help them with their adjustment.

### **3.1.3 Understanding the subject material at school**

The fourth difficulty that the young immigrant encountered after relocation was understanding the subject material at school (reported by 16 out of 30 young Ukrainian participants). These 16 participants interrupted their education in Ukraine and had to go to a new school in Canada right after immigration. Due to the low level of English proficiency, many students encountered various problems with understanding the school material, for example in math or science. As they could not understand the content of the subjects, they lagged behind and required more time to learn a new material. A fourteen-year-student mentioned:

I had troubles with science because of English. I don't understand the concept and I need more time to find out the information in my own language and then study it in English. I was translating every word into my language, and then I was studying it in English, and then I was improving.

The level of English proficiency of the majority of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth was insufficient, so they could not fully participate in the studying process at school and needed some time to acquire basic knowledge of English. A twelve-year-old student said:

When I came here, it was very hard for me to concentrate in class because I just didn't know what they were talking about.

An ESL teacher from Ukrainian bilingual school commented:

An academic level of Ukrainian children, who are arriving here, is lower now than it was before. Probably, 95 per cent [of them have] English level A1.1. Beginners.

Limited English proficiency of many participants in the study hindered their comprehension of the subject content. The Ukrainian immigrant students complained that they had bad grades in a high school because of the English language barrier. A fourteen-year-old boy explained:

I never understood what other people wanted from me. Because of that, my grades were really low at school.

In the Ukrainian Bilingual school, the children and adolescents had an opportunity to study the subjects in Ukrainian, and it was easier for them to comprehend some information and acquire school material, at least partially. However, those Ukrainian students who went to a

regular Canadian school had more problems with the studying process, as the teachers could not explain a subject to facilitate the immigrant student's need because of the language barrier. In the interviews, 12 out of 20 children and youth who attended Canadian schools reported that they experienced the problem of understanding their teachers' instructions and content of subject material. In comparison, three out of 10 participants from Ukrainian Bilingual school reported the same difficulty in their interviews. A ten-year-old girl from a regular Canadian school reported:

When a teacher is saying something, I do not understand or do not hear her. I have to ask everything again and again.

A teacher from the Ukrainian Bilingual school added:

Well, they miss a lot, of the concept, especially in English, if they are being taught in English. Science and math, for example. They had science class which is a totally an English subject. Math is being transferred as much as it is possible, but they did it a little bit differently in Ukraine than they do it here in Canada. We work through math, so they are fairly good at it. They just have the hard time reading the word when there are the word problems.

The language barrier was the main and huge challenge for Ukrainian immigrant children and youth that hindered their academic adaptation in Canada. Although the educational systems and schooling process are different in two countries, the majority of children and youth participants adjusted to the school environment reasonably well and did not express any difficulties related with the educational system in Canada. However, to acquire adequate level of English proficiency to participate in educational process on par with Canadian classmates required multiple efforts and time for the Ukrainian children and youth in Canada.

### **3.1.4 Shyness and fear of making mistakes in English**

In the interviews, nine children and adolescents reported that communication was very important for them, but as they could not understand what everybody was talking about, they felt stressed and were afraid to talk to their peers and teachers. Upon immigration, the children had fear of talking in English because they felt uncomfortable making mistakes or pronouncing some words incorrectly in front of their classmates and teachers.

In addition, Ukrainian immigrant children and youth were shy to speak because of their accent and not knowing how to pronounce some words. The children and youth were worried that nobody would understand them when they start talking in English. A fourteen-year-old teenager explained:

For example, when a person is asking me something, and it is hard for me to answer because I will say... even when I know this word, but I pronounce it differently, and the person will not understand me.

An eight-year-old student added:

It was kind of hard to talk at first time when my dad was signing me up for a kindergarten. A principal said “Hi” and I didn’t know English and was hiding behind my dad because I was nervous. And then the first couple days I was learning English and then, probably, a month or two later I could say the words they taught me, and it wasn’t not like really much, but now kind of better.

Low English speaking proficiency effected the participants’ adaptation and transition to a new society, as well as building the new social networks and establishing their personal relationship with peers, classmates, teachers, and friends. Often, adapting to the new school was not an easy and smooth process for Ukrainian immigrant children and youth. Because of their inability to speak English, they were frustrated and did not know how to behave in the unfamiliar Canadian schools where everybody spoke a foreign language. Some children and adolescents felt isolated because they could not understand a word in English and were too intimidated to talk in the new language. A teacher commented:

A lot of the kids, when they are going to live here, they are going through the process, you know from kinder garden, they are going to learn an alphabet, that’s where they learn the word structures, and those kinds [Ukrainian immigrant children and youth] don’t come with that, so they are actually virtually starting right at the beginning. And some kinds are shy and don’t want to speak in English, because they are thinking they gonna make a mistake, but those kinds who are brave enough, they are just jump right in and speak as much as they can, they are the ones who can learn faster.

Since the inability to speak fluent English decreased their social interaction and academic performance, many children experienced various challenges at school and needed some time to get used to the new environment and build up the confidence to talk in English. In addition, every immigrant child or adolescent was different in terms of an individual path of the new language acquisition. The teachers explained:

It depends on how old the child is when they get here. If they are 5 and they are in kindergarten, they can catch up within 6 months, because it is a lot of verbal and learning verbs, and then they catch on quickly. But if they come as an older student, I would say maybe 4 – 5 years, maybe 6, to actually be proficient.

An ESL teacher commented:

Everything depends on a child because some children adjust very fast and catch on their peers for 3 - 4 years, but some children, who are naturally shy or very calm, quiet, not outgoing, introverts, they just hide in a corner and do not want to study. Then teachers are trying to communicate with them and their parents saying that it would be better to transfer the child into Ukrainian school because he/she has a very little progress in English. A teacher cannot even evaluate their progress because the child does not talk and does not show any signs of the language acquisition.

Thus, teachers had to find a special approach to the children who were shy or had lack of confidence and make a child feel welcomed, encourage him or her to participate in a studying process, and show his or her potential regardless the children's level of English proficiency. A teacher from the Ukrainian bilingual school reported:

If they come, well in grade 6, they always have an ESL teacher, even in high school, so they catch on, and I guess, the more words they put it, they faster they catch on, but it all depends on the individual child. Yeh, an individual child and individual character. There were two brother that came three years ago, and one brother is in this classroom, and he is the child who just blossomed. He just quickly caught on, he is above his reading level, he speaks really well, he just embraced it. Where the other brother, his older brother is shy, and so he's nervous, he did not catch on as quickly. He was having a little bit more difficulty, but he was two years older when he came.

To overcome the challenge regarding the fear of speaking in English, the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth had to work closely with the school personnel who helped to acquire English and remove the child's and adolescent's language barrier. Also, the help of the ESL teachers was offered in many schools for the children with limited English proficiency, who worked especially on the child' and adolescents' language needs.

### **3.1.5 Translating school material back and forth**

Another pressing issue raised as a concern by four out of 30 participants was translation of the subject material back and forth between English and Ukrainian. As the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth had their existing knowledge in Ukrainian, they had to spend time translating the studying material from English to Ukrainian to get an idea of what the subject was about or how to complete their homework. A ten-year-old boy added:

I did not understand anything. I was given a homework in English and I didn't understand it. I used my cell phone and translated everything, but now I'm not doing it.

The translation of all the subject material appeared to be a time-consuming process. The immigrant children and youth had to perform double work, compared to their Canadian



classmates, in order to understand the subject and not to miss any important information. The children and adolescents who attended Ukrainian bilingual school, often relied on their Ukrainian classmates or teacher assistants who could always translate the unknown words for the newly-arrived student or to interpret some information in English. Some interviewees reported that at the first stages of adjustment at school they often asked their Ukrainian speaking classmates to help them when the issues with English barrier arose. A twelve-year-old boy mentioned:

I tried to learn more words, and if I don't know the words, I looked in the dictionary. But if it's not in the dictionary, I just asked my friends if they know it.

A fourteen-year-old interviewee added:

I write a lot of essays for English class. That's kind of much better, cause of that it gives me more understanding and variety of words to use, like vocabulary. And my friends, kinda like, proofread it, and they like: "O... You did not use that word, and it's kind of, doesn't sound correctly." And they give me a new, and I'm like: "Oh, that's great. I did not know you can use that." So just like help me around.

Although translating all the school material was a tiresome and time-consuming task, the young Ukrainian immigrants did not have any other choice when they wanted to get some knowledge and study at school. They had to work hard not only with the subject content but with the new language, which was an obstacle on their way to understand the main information presented by the teachers at school.

### **3.1.6 Adjustment to the cultural differences and the way Canadians spoke English**

The cultural differences and the communicative patterns of native speakers of Canadian English were another facet of difficulties faced by immigrant children and youth upon arrival. In total, four participants reported that everything was new for them, and they needed some time to learn the peculiarities of Canadian culture and language. These four Ukrainian children and youth expressed their concerns that they could not keep up with a conversation and express themselves properly because they did not know particular words, jokes or slang, which their Canadian peers used in the conversation. A fourteen-year-old interviewee explained:

Sometimes, because their language is more academic, they [Canadian peers] use more slang, and sometimes I don't understand their accents. But it's not like all the time. Mostly, I understand them.

Apart from becoming proficient in English, Ukrainian immigrant children and youth also had to learn cultural specifics to socialize with native-speaking friends. A twelve-year-old boy commented on a situation when he wanted to make jokes with his Canadian friends:

So when they like speak, and something funny is happening, I mess it up saying the words, and I say them wrong.

Because English was his second language, he sometimes could not select the word with appropriate meaning for the conversation. Another fourteen-year-old interviewee said that it was complicated for her to understand a conversation because of the speech rate and the word choice of the Canadian speakers:

If these children are the same as me, who learn English as their second language, they try to speak using not very difficult words, very simple ones. Then it's not hard to communicate with them. But if it is only Canadians, whose English is like their first language, so I have difficulties to understand them.

Additionally, besides the language problems, the transition to a new school and society itself was stressful for some children and adolescents, as they were not prepared and did not know what to expect from a totally new environment. A fourteen-years-old girl said:

Like it is hard to understand people cause you don't know the language. It's not the same in school in Ukraine and isn't the same like in here. So it is kind of hard.

The transition into the new society and adaptation to the different norms and schooling process without knowing a target language appeared to be a challenge for the young Ukrainian immigrants. As for the educational system, the teaching approaches and studying program in Ukraine differed from the ones in Canada. However, participants did not express any concerns as for the challenges in educational system and studying process itself. They liked the fact that in Canada they did not have as much homework as in Ukrainian schools, and teachers were friendly. One of the teachers from Ukrainian bilingual school said:

They [Ukrainian immigrant children and youth] like the new system of education. They do not have too much homework here, and teachers are very kind, nobody shouts at them or demands anything. So they do not have any special difficulties with it.

The other teacher added:

I think their parents have harder time because in Ukraine they always have homework and we tend not to give the kids homework as much as it here, and they're always asking for more and more homework. And here kids don't get homework as much.

Language played a key role in establishing social networks and interacting with different people around. Many of the young Ukrainian immigrants had unpleasant experiences being ignored by other children, had to stay aside of different activities or could not play with their peers during the initial stages of adjustment in the new country. Even those children and youth who could speak English had difficulties understanding other people because of different accents and the speech rate of native English speakers. They had to get used to the new language peculiarities and learn some idiomatic expressions to understand their interlocutors.

### **3.2 Changes after acquiring English**

Becoming proficient in English, the children and adolescents were able to overcome the main challenges connected with school performance, relationship with friends and teachers, anxiety and stress after the immigration, etc. When they could speak and understand English, a plethora of new opportunities became available for them. Ukrainian immigrant children and youth could easily learn more about Canadian culture, integrate into a new society, communicate with different people, and participate in various activities. Moreover, Ukrainian immigrant children and youth felt more confident when they could use English in everyday life. They were not afraid to speak up and interact with other children. An ESL teacher noted:

When they become fluent in English, they start socializing more with Canadian children. And the more they socialize with Canadian students, the more they feel confident. They feel like they are Canadians. It's very interesting to observe because many Ukrainian children stick together in the groups, and sometimes their English lags behind because of that. Some children don't want to mingle with Ukrainian kids, and it's very obvious, they want to integrate into Canadian society too much, and their language just blossoms out. Some of them want to be Canadians, and when they have Canadian friends, they become confident, and sometimes even think they are superior to other children from Ukraine.

In many schools, teachers tried to assist Ukrainian immigrant children and youth and make their adaptation process as smooth as possible. Some accommodations, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, were provided through the school system. Attending the ESL classes and working with specially-trained school personnel, Ukrainian immigrant students had the chance to become proficient in English. Twenty two out of 30 child and youth participants attended the ESL classes to improve their English proficiency upon arrival in Canada. In total, 14 out of 22 participants said that the ESL classes were quite helpful for them and that attending these classes improved their English proficiency. During the ESL classes, Ukrainian immigrant

children and adolescents were offered various activities for improving their vocabulary, writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills. A ten-year-old interviewee explained:

They (the ESL classes) are helpful for me because I learned new words. ESL classes were about words and like learning English, reading a lot, writing a lot, like that. To improve my English, I was writing a lot, reading lots of books every day, two or one book every day, and writing every day. I did RAZ-KIDS (an online reading program). I read in English.

An ESL teacher commented:

When they [Ukrainian immigrant children and youth] come here with the level A1.1, they can't participate in the school process as much as Canadian children can. In our school, the children are dismissed from an ESL class once they've achieved the level B 1.2... Then I monitor the child together with other teachers... And sometimes, when the children are very skillful, I can dismiss them even in 3 years because they acquire language very fast... If they [Ukrainian immigrant children and youth] have the level A1.1, they don't understand what's going on around them at all. If they acquire the level B1.2, they almost understand everything. Anyway, they do have some difficulties, but the age of a child and the level of English proficiency should be considered as well.

Once the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth could speak fluent English, they could be engaged in various activities with their peers, understand their teachers, and express themselves properly. The young Ukrainian immigrants did not want to be the outsiders, but to have the equal opportunities as their Canadian peers. An eight-year-old interviewee commented:

I felt more confident because like I could understand my classmates, and I could understand my teacher what everybody was saying, and they could understand me. They wanted me to play with them. They want me to be with them, play tag and hide-and-seek.

Moreover, they could not only communicate with their Ukrainian friends, but also to build social networks with native and non-native speakers of English and with different ethnic groups in Canada. English proficiency enabled them to explore and understand the new environment in a full scope and achieve success in different spheres of life. The self-recognition and recognition among their classmates, peers, or other Canadian children was also an important step to establish social networks. A twelve-year-old boy mentioned:

Well, I got more friends. When I just came here, there were people that did not even like me. I actually had no friends up to two months I was here. And now... I have a lot of friends.

Another ten-year-old interviewee added:

Yes, a lot of things have changed. I am not hesitating as much as when I came. I can help people that came to Canada recently. I can help them communicate. Sometimes when my parents need some help with English, I can help them.

Successful academic achievements and friendship were among the important needs of the interviewees. They reported that their school performance got better with the improvement of English proficiency, as did their personal relationship with new friends. A fourteen-year-old participant commented:

Actually, I started to communicate with more people and chill around with them. I understand teachers, my marks went off better.

As the result, learning English played an important role in the Ukrainian children' and youth's life after relocation to Canada. Being able to communicate in English, the young Ukrainian Immigrants could mingle with more children and adolescents establishing new social networks, as well as to succeed academically.

### **3.3 Motivation to speak fluent English**

Apart from various difficulties connected with the process of learning a new language in Canada, the young Ukrainian immigrants reported different reasons for wanting to know English while living in the new country. As many participants had limited English proficiency at immigration, they had different motivations helping them to master the new language. The following motivations are presented in the Table 3.2

**Table 3.2**  
***Motivations to speak English***

<b>Type of Motivation</b>	<b>Number of children and adolescents (out of 30)</b>
1. Finding a better job	22 (73.3%)
2. Acquiring higher education	19 (63.3%)
3. Interacting with peers and friends	11 (36.7%)

As Table 3.2 indicates, for immigrant youth, especially for high school students, top priorities were an opportunity to enter the labour marker of Canada and find a good job (73.3%), as well as to acquire a higher education (63.3%). Another important motivation for studying the

language expressed by the immigrant children and youth was communication and interaction with peers and friends (36.7%). During the interview, 22 young Ukrainian immigrants reported that they wanted to know English to find a better job in the future, and 19 children and adolescents admitted that the main motivation for them to learn English was getting higher education after finishing their school. The children and youth reported that after school they wanted to study in colleges and universities, and without English it would be impossible for them to achieve their goals. A fourteen-year-old girl explained:

A lot of people speak it and I have to speak it too cause everything in here is like English, so if I want to get a great job, I have to know English, if I wanna go to university, I need to know English.

Another fourteen-year-old teenager added:

My motivation is, probably... I'm thinking like if I acquire this level of English, it will be easier for me to stay here. It will be easier for me to enter a university, find more friends, and adapt better. Also, my parents motivate me because I see how they study, and I want to study English too like they do.

In addition, their parents' struggles were a good motivator for their children to acquire English faster. In nineteen families, only one of the parents could adequately communicate in English, typically it was the father, who was a breadwinner in the families. Despite the fact that women had good job positions in Ukraine before immigrating to Canada, they could not use their professional skills in Canada because of insufficient knowledge of English. Thus, all the parents pointed out the importance of higher education in Canada for professional growth and future success and they encouraged their children to learn English harder. A ten-year-old boy said:

Once my dad said to me that when I will be in Canada, and someone tells me: "Give me a ball". And I will give a pencil, everybody would laugh at me. Then, I've decided to study English.

Another important reason to study English named by 11 (out of 30) Ukrainian immigrant children and adolescents was willingness to communicate with their peers and develop friendships. An eight-year-old girl described the reasons that motivated her to study English:

I want to speak English to understand my classmates and the teacher, and they could understand me cause like when I talk, they don't understand me. It can be hard to tell what I want to do.

Ukrainian Immigrant children and youth realized that knowing English and being able to communicate in the language could offer an array of opportunities in the new country. They

highlighted that they would have better chances for a good job, higher education, and successful life with the higher level of English proficiency. The understanding of how language interrelated with success in the new country motivated the young Ukrainian immigrants to become proficient in English and to be on par with their peers.

### **3.4 The role of Ukrainian bilingual education and Ukrainian personnel in adaptation of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth after arrival to Canada**

Many parents from Ukraine had different options for schooling for their children. Especially those who lived in Saskatoon had a unique opportunity to enroll their child into the Ukrainian bilingual school. Ten out of 30 participants in this study attended the Ukrainian bilingual school. Bilingual education appeared to be a good practice for some immigrant children and adolescents, especially for those who just arrived from Ukraine and had considerable struggles with English. Only two children out of 10 who went to the Ukrainian Bilingual school mentioned in the interviews that they had difficulties to find friends and communicate with them. By contrast, 17 out of 20 participants who attended Canadian schools said that they faced various challenges related to socialization and communication with peers at school.

In the Ukrainian bilingual school, children did not feel isolated because they could easily express their desires and concerns, find friends, as well as participate in educational process to some extent. The presence of a teacher, an assistant, or just another child at schools who could speak Ukrainian or Russian played an important role in the adaptation process for the Ukrainian children and youth after arrival in Canada. A ten-year-old girl who was studying at the Ukrainian bilingual school explained:

My difficulty was I could not really speak and talk English, so I was hanging out with the kids that spoke other languages like Russian or Ukrainian.

According to the participants' interviews, in the Ukrainian bilingual school, many teachers could speak Ukrainian, including an ESL teacher who was originally from Ukraine. Those participants who were enrolled into the Ukrainian bilingual school had more chances to understand the instructions of their teachers, communicate with peers, and express themselves using their native language than those Ukrainians who went to the regular English-speaking schools. A ten-year-old student from a regular English-speaking school reported:

At school I did not understand what the teacher was saying, maybe I understood a little bit, but not that much at the beginning. And when we were writing something, I had to

look at the other children what they were doing because I did not understand what I had to do in the class.

A teacher from the Ukrainian bilingual school explained:

When they [Ukrainian immigrant children or adolescents] come, they are quite shy, quite reserved... until they meet the person – a friend, and then it gets a little bit easier for them. Well, they are learning English, so it's hard for them to understand what's going on in the class sometimes, but it is good because we [teachers] can always translate it into Ukrainian for them.

Another teacher from the same school mentioned:

They (Ukrainian immigrant children and youth) do not have any problems to adapt to the new social environment at this school because more than 60 children are from Ukraine here... Third of all the children are from Ukraine. As for the other schools, they do have them [difficulties]. I'm pretty sure about that because some children came to our school when they've attended Canadian English-speaking schools before. Some teachers in Ukraine advised the parents to send their children directly to a Canadian school after immigration, so the children would be able to learn English much faster. But everything has happened visa versa.

Since many participants experienced difficulties with understanding the content material in different schools, thanks to bilingual schools, the young immigrants had more opportunities to get at least some knowledge in the subjects that were taught in Ukrainian, since different classes were taught in both languages in English and Ukrainian. Also, Ukrainian children and youth had a chance to be evaluated in the language they understood. A teacher from the Ukrainian bilingual school mentioned:

Here, in our school, a lot of extra subjects, such as health and social studies, and art should be taught in Ukrainian, so they are able to catch on there. We have Ukrainian English arts here as well, so they feel comfortable, and they feel accomplished in those, because they fully understand what's going on in those subjects and subject areas (taught in Ukrainian), but in English they are missing a bit.

As was reported by the teachers, the children in the Ukrainian bilingual school were much less ethnically varied, compared to other Canadian schools. Most children at school were of Ukrainian ethnic background, and one third of all the children were the Ukrainian immigrants. Therefore, the teachers and assistants had opportunities to focus more on supporting the newly-arrived Ukrainian children. An ESL teacher from the Ukrainian Bilingual school explained:

The children in our school are lucky because teachers can speak Ukrainian and should know whether the child understands some material or not... We have two teacher assistants, who can speak Ukrainian. Sometimes, teachers ask them to work with



Ukrainian children, interpreting something or explaining some material in Ukrainian. But there is nothing like this in other schools. So the teachers have to do some adaptation activities by themselves using some pictures or google translate. They somehow cope with it. Overall, it is a huge issue in Canada because there are a lot of immigrant children, and all of them are speaking different languages. A teacher cannot do adaptation activities for these kids all the time. So the children have to sink or swim. Natural process, like we say.

The other teacher added:

It's sort of a special school, because you have a half of kids learning English, and the other half learning Ukrainian. So we do not have any cultures, or languages, so they [students] kind are really quite helpful to one another if they don't understand. So it depends on a subject. In Ukrainian language arts, Ukrainian kids, you know, they are the top of the class, and in English arts, the Canadian kids do well.

Nevertheless, many children and adolescents who immigrated to Canada from Ukraine did not have the opportunity of Ukrainian bilingual education, especially those who lived in small towns or suburbs. Some of the students were lucky if they had at least one person at school who could speak in their native language and help them during the first stages of their adjustment. A twelve-year-old boy told about his experience:

There was a teacher that could speak Ukrainian and Canadian, so I used to work with him for like 40 min. per day. I started off like with the verbs and everything.

The Ukrainian immigrant child or adolescent could at least somehow talk to others through that person who could serve as a bridge in communication with other people. One of these students was a fourteen-year-old adolescent who went to a regular Canadian high school but had a teacher who could speak Ukrainian. He commented:

Basically, I had troubles with teachers. The teachers did not understand me at all. I had a Ukrainian teacher and some Ukrainian guys that helped me understand what the teachers wanted and what they tried to explain to me. I had a Ukrainian teacher at school who brought me over from the last class to teach me at least some basic English.

However, not every Ukrainian immigrant family thought that Ukrainian bilingual education would be helpful for their child's adaptation and integration into Canadian society. Among 20 participants who were enrolled into regular Canadian schools, there were 4 students who initially attended the Ukrainian bilingual school upon immigration to Canada, but eventually were transferred into Canadian schools. Despite the low level of English proficiency of a child or an adolescent, many parents preferred their children to be enrolled into Canadian schools because

they believed that the child or the adolescent would be able to acquire English faster and would have fewer difficulties adjusting to Canadian culture.

As for the Ukrainian bilingual school, various Ukrainian families thought the children and adolescents do not have enough motivation to study English there because of other Ukrainian children who were flocking together and communicating in Ukrainian with each other. A fourteen-year-old adolescent commented:

I went to Bishop Filevych, which is Ukrainian/English. Yeah, I had Soloma [Ukrainian friend], which wasn't so bad. She would help me around, and then she had her friends, and we just like... Yeh, we became friends. Yeh, it was much easier, and I wasn't so lonely. Cause my friends were talking all Ukrainian, I could not learn any English, so my parents were like very frustrated, so they just sent me to English school. And then just kind of adapting to English situations, I like sucked into knowledge, so it wasn't that hard.

Four parents in the study mentioned that bilingual education lowered the chances of their children for successful assimilation and adaptation in Canada because it could make them lag behind their peers in Canadian schools in terms of English proficiency and subject knowledge. Thus, upon arrival to Canada, many parents sent their children directly to Canadian schools to assure better chances for better life in the new country.

In general, the choice of a school depended on the parents' decision on which school would be better for their child and the location where the family was going to settle down. Some children and youth were moved back and forth from one school to another, as their parents wanted to find a perfect place for them to study in. In some cases, it was difficult for a child or an adolescent to adapt in one school or another, especially when they had limited English proficiency or did not show any progress in education.

In sum, Ukrainian immigrant children and youth did experience various difficulties when arriving to Canada. Language barrier was one of the pressing issues that effected all the facets of adaptation process of the interviewees in the study. With the improvement of English, the progress was observed in all the aspects of social life of the participants. Level of English proficiency influenced academic achievement, peer relationship, school and sociocultural aspects of life of the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth after relocation. It appeared that none of the immigrant children and adolescents were prepared to face the challenges upon immigration, especially with the language barrier. It was also noted that the existence of Ukrainian bilingual education, Ukrainian speaking personnel in schools, and ESL classes helped the interviewees in

faster adaptation to the new environment and made their transition in the new social environment less stressful.

### 3.5 English proficiency and adaptation

The results reported in this section present the statistical analysis of the data generated from the questionnaires for parents and the English proficiency scores of the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth. A comparison was made between responses of parents who were grouped according to the following demographic characteristics of their children: age, gender, duration of stay in Canada, age upon arrival in Canada, as well as ESL classes attendance, school choice, and level of English proficiency.

#### 3.5.1 Significance of English for Ukrainian immigrant children and youth

*Question 1* “How important is English for your child to be accepted in the Canadian society?” was answered by 30 parents. In their responses to this question, 13 (43.3%) parents considered knowing English was *crucial* for acceptance in the Canadian society. Ten (33.4%) parents answered that it was *very important*; 3 (10%) replied that it was *moderately important*, and 4 (13.3%) answered that it was *slightly important*. No respondents thought that knowing English was *unimportant* for their children. The responses are summarized in Table 3.3.

In the parents’ answers to *Question 2* about the importance of knowing English for their children to perform well at school, the participants provided responses as follows. Out of 30 (100%) respondents, 8 (26.7%) parents reported that it was *crucial* for their children to know English to perform well at school, and 21 (70%) respondents answered that it was *very important*; 1 (3.3%) parent answered that it was *slightly important*, and none of the respondents thought that it was *moderately important* or *unimportant*.

There was a significant difference in responses to the above question across the two groups of parents: those whose children were 8 to 10 years old (they will be referred to as “parents of younger children”) and those whose children were 11 to 14 years old (“parents of adolescents”),  $t = -2.073$  and  $p = 0.0382$ . The results suggest that the parents of younger children (from 8 to 10 years old) considered English proficiency more important for their children’s success in school than the parents of adolescents (from 11 to 14 years old).

*Question 3* asked respondents how important was knowing English for their child's future career. As shown in Table 3.3, out of 30 (100%) parents, 19 (63.3%) parents considered that it was *crucial*, and 11 (36.7%) answered that it was *very important to* know English for their children's future career. None of the respondents thought that it was *moderately important*, *slightly important*, or *unimportant*.

There was a significant difference in parents' responses across the following two groups: parents whose children stayed in Canada less than three years (shorter stay), and parents whose children resided in the country more than three years (longer stay),  $t = -2.16$  and  $p = 0.0307$ . The analysis suggests that the parents of immigrant children and youth who stayed in Canada more than three years considered that it was more important to know English for the future career for their children than those parents whose children resided in Canada less than three years.

*Question 4* asked responders about the importance of knowing English for their child's communication with friends. As shown in Table 3.3, out of 30 (100%) respondents, 8 (26.7%) chose the answer *crucial* and 16 (53.3%) considered that it was *very important*, where only 3 (10%) parents answered that it was *moderately important*, and 3 (10%) – *slightly important to* know English for their child's communication with friends. No responders thought that knowing English was unimportant for their children's communication with friends.

There was a difference in responses to the *Question 4* across the "longer-" and "shorter-stay" groups of parents (i.e., parents of children who stayed in Canada for under or over 3 years),  $t = -1.985$  and  $p = 0.0471$ . Five (33.3%) out of 15 parents in the "shorter-stay" group and 3 (20%) out of 15 parents in the "longer-stay group" reported it was more important to know English for their children to communicate with friends. The results suggest that the parents of those immigrant children and youth who stayed in Canada less than three years considered that it was more important to know English for their children's communication with friends than those parents whose children resided in Canada more than three years.

Additionally, a significant difference was observed in parents' answers to the question across the groups of parents whose children had higher level of English proficiency and those parents whose children had lower level of English proficiency,  $t = -2.206$  and  $p = 0.0274$ . According to the respondents, those parents of children and adolescents with lower English proficiency considered English to be more important for communication with friends than the parents of children and youth with higher level of English proficiency.

**Table 3.3**  
***Significance of the English language for adaptation***

Question	Crucial	Very important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Unimportant	Total
1. How important is English for your child to be accepted in the Canadian society?	13 (43.3%)	10 (33.4%)	3 (10%)	4 (13.3%)	0 (0%)	30
2. How important is English for your child's performance at school?	8 (26.7%)	21 (70%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.3%)	0 (0%)	30
3. How important is English for your child's future career?	19 (63.3%)	11 (36.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	30
4. How important is English for your child to communicate with friends?	8 (26.7%)	16 (53.3%)	3 (10%)	3 (10%)	0 (0%)	30

### 3.5.2 Difficulties associated with the level of English proficiency

*Question 5* asked the participant parents whether their children experienced any difficulties with finding new friends because of the level of English proficiency. As shown in Table 3.4, out of 30 (100%) participants, 11 (36.7%) parents noted that their children have *never* experienced such difficulties, 13 (43.3%) respondents reported that their child *sometimes* could not find friends because of his or her level of English proficiency, and 6 (20%) parents answered their child *often* faced the problem of finding friends because of the level of English proficiency. None of the respondents reported that their child *always* experienced any difficulties with finding friends because of his/her level of English proficiency.

There was a significant difference in parents' answers for the question across two groups of parents identified according to their children's (adolescents') gender,  $t = -2.276$  and  $p = 0.02$ . According to the parents' answers, female children (adolescents) more often experienced difficulties with finding friends because of their level of English proficiency than male children (adolescents). As the parents reported, out of 17 males, 7 (41.2%) *never* experienced any difficulties to find friends because of their level of English proficiency, 8 (47 %) boys *sometimes* experienced it, and only 2 (11.8%) males *often* faced such kind of problem. By contrast, out of 13 females, 4 (30.8%) *never* encountered the problem to find friends because of their level of English, 5 (38.4 %) girls *sometimes* experienced it, and 4 (30.8%) *often* experienced such difficulty because of their level of English proficiency.

In addition, significant difference was observed in the responses of parents whose children arrived in Canada in earlier (4-6 years old) or in older age,  $t = 2.727$  and  $p = 0.006$ . According to the parents' answers, children (adolescents) who arrived in Canada in older age experienced more difficulties with finding friends because of their English proficiency than those who came to Canada in younger age.

*Question 6* asked respondents whether their children experienced difficulties with understanding teacher's instructions because of their level of English proficiency. The possible options for answer were: *never*, *sometimes*, *often*, *always*. As described in the Table 3.4, out of 30 (100%) parents, 8 (26.7%) replied *never* and 16 parents (53.3%) chose the option *sometimes*. The lowest percentage was for the options *often* and *always*, where 5 respondents (16.7%) chose the option *often*, and 1 parent (3.33%) chose the option *always*.

There was a significant difference in parents' responses to the question across the "shorter-stay" and "longer-stay" groups of parents (i.e., parents whose children stayed in Canada for under and over three years),  $t = -2.76$  and  $p = 0.0058$ . According to the responses of the parents, none of the children who stayed in Canada more than three years *often* or *always* experienced such difficulties because of the level of English proficiency, whereas within the "longer stay" parents group, out of 15 respondents, 5 (33.3%) parents noted that their children *often* faced the problem of understanding teachers' instructions because of their level of English proficiency, and 1 (6.7%) parent reported that his/her child *always* experienced such difficulty. The results suggest that those children (adolescents) who stayed in Canada longer experienced fewer difficulties with understanding teachers' instructions because of their level of English proficiency than those who

arrived in Canada recently, whereas the longer duration of stay in Canada positively influenced the child's English proficiency.

*Question 7* asked respondents how often their child experienced any difficulties with performance at school because of their level of English proficiency. As described in Table 3.4, out of 30 (100%) participants, 11 (36.7%) parents noted that their children have *never* experience such difficulties, 12 (40%) parents responded that their child *sometimes* experienced difficulties with performance at school because of his/her level of English proficiency, 6 (20%) parents chose the option *always*, and only 1 (3.3%) respondent reported that his/her child *always* faced the difficulties with performance at school because of the level of English proficiency.

There was a significant difference in answers to the above question across two groups of parents identified according to their children's gender,  $t = 2.033$  and  $p = 0.042$ . The analysis shows that the male children (adolescents) more often experienced difficulties with performance at school because of their level of English proficiency than their female counterparts. Out of 17 boys, only 5 (29.4%) participants *never* experienced any difficulties with performance at school because of their level of English proficiency, 9 (53%) males *sometimes* experienced such difficulties, and 3 (17.6 %) boys *often* encountered this problem, whereas out of 13 females, 6 (46.3%) girls have *never* faced such a problem, only 3 (23%) females *sometimes* experienced it, 3 (23 %) girls *often* and 1 (7.7 %) *always* encountered such a difficulty with performance at school because of their level of English proficiency.

Moreover, there was a significant difference in parents' answers to the question across parents of children (8-10 years old) and parents of adolescents (11-14 years old),  $t = 2.25$  and  $p = 0.024$ . As reported by the parents, the older children and adolescents experienced more difficulties with performance at school than their younger counterparts.

*Question 8* asked respondents whether their children experienced any difficulties with understanding Canadian culture because of their level of English proficiency. Out of 30 (100%) responses, *sometimes* had the highest frequency of 15 (40%), followed by *never* chosen by 10 (36.7%) parents. The answers *often* and *always* had the lowest frequencies of responses: 4 (20%) and 1 (3.3%) respectively.

Significant difference was observed in the parent's answers across the groups of parents, whose children had better English speaking skills and those parents whose children had worse English speaking skills,  $t = -2.021$  and  $p = 0.043$ . The results suggest that the children (youth) who

had better speaking skills experienced difficulties with understanding Canadian culture than those children (adolescents) who had worse speaking skills in English.

*Question 9* asked participants whether their children experienced any difficulties while attending extracurricular activities because of their level of English proficiency. As shown in Table 3.4, out of 30 (100%) respondents, 14 (46.7%) chose the option *never*, and another 14 (46.7%) participants answered *sometimes*. Only 1 (3.33%) parent chose the option *often*, and 1 (3.33%) participant noted that his/her child *always* had difficulties while attending extracurricular activities because of his/her level of English proficiency.

There was a significant difference in parents' responses to the question across those groups of parents of children who had a shorter and longer stay in Canada,  $t = -2.877$  and  $p = 0.004$ . Those children who lived in Canada less than three years, experienced more difficulties while attending extracurricular activities because of their level of English than those who stayed in Canada more than three years. Among children (adolescents) who stayed in Canada less than three years, only 2 (13.3%) *never* experienced any difficulties while attending extracurricular activities, while among children (adolescents) who lived in Canada for more than three years, 12 (80%) children (youth) *never* faced the same problem. To compare, in the "shorter-stay" group, 11 (77.3%) children (adolescents) *sometimes* had some difficulties during extracurricular activities because of their level of English proficiency, whereas in the "longer-stay" group, only 3 (20%) children (adolescents) *sometimes* had the same issues. In addition, in "shorter-stay" group, 1 (3.33%) child (adolescent) had *often* and 1 (3.33%) – *always* faced such difficulties because of his/her level of English proficiency, whereas in "longer-stay" group, none of the children *often* or *always* experienced the same issue.

*Question 10* asked respondents whether their child experienced any difficulties being understood by friends because of their level of English proficiency. According to the answers of 30 (100%) parents, 12 (40%) children (adolescents) *never* and 15 (50%) *sometimes* faced this issue, and 3 (10%) children (adolescents) *often* experienced difficulties being understood. None of the respondents answered that his/her child *always* experienced this problem.

There was a significant difference in answers to the question between parents of children and parents of adolescents,  $t = -1.97$  and  $p = 0.04$ . The results suggest that younger children experienced more difficulties being understood by their friends because of their level of English proficiency than their adolescent peers.



Furthermore, a significant difference was observed in answers to the question between parents of children with higher and with lower English proficiencies,  $t = -2.081$  and  $p = 0.037$ . Children and adolescents with a worse level of English proficiency, encountered more difficulties being understood by their friends than those who had higher levels of English proficiency.

**Table 3.4**  
*Difficulties connected with level of English proficiency*

Questions	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always	Total
<b>5.</b> Because of his/her level of English proficiency does your child experience any difficulties to find friends?	11 (36.7 %)	13 (43.3 %)	6 (20 %)	0 (0 %)	30
<b>6.</b> Because of his/her level of English proficiency does your child experience any difficulties to understand teachers' instructions?	8 (26.7 %)	16 (53.3 %)	5 (16.7 %)	1 (3.33 %)	30
<b>7.</b> Because of his/her level of English proficiency does your child experience any difficulties with performance at school?	11 (36.7 %)	12 (40 %)	6 (20 %)	1 (3.33 %)	30
<b>8.</b> Because of his/her level of English proficiency does your child experience any difficulties with understanding Canadian culture?	10 (36.7 %)	15 (40 %)	4 (20 %)	1 (3.33 %)	30
<b>9.</b> Because of his/her level of English proficiency does your child experience any difficulties while attending extracurricular activities?	14 (46.7%)	14 (46.7%)	1 (3.33%)	1 (3.33%)	30
<b>10.</b> Because of his/her level of English proficiency does your child experience any difficulties while being understood by his/her friends?	12 (40 %)	15 (50 %)	3 (10 %)	0 (0 %)	30

In sum, the level of English proficiency influenced the successful adaptation of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Canada. The results suggest that the children and adolescents with lower level of English proficiency struggled to find friends, integrate into Canadian culture, and perform well at school. Differences in gender, age, duration of stay in Canada, age upon arrival also played a significant role in Ukrainian immigrant children's and youth's life after relocation to Canada. Those children and youth who arrived in Canada in older age experienced more difficulties studying at school, finding friends, interacting with peers than their younger peers.

### 3.5.3 Language and adaptation

Parents of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth were given a few statements (outlined below) and had to respond to them by choosing options in the Likert scale format: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *neutral*, *agree*, and *strongly agree*. After reading the Statement 1 “*High level of English proficiency facilitates faster adaptation of my child in a new country*”, respondents were requested to choose an answer option reflecting whether/how strongly they agreed or disagreed with this statement. Out of 30 (100%) respondents, 15 (50%) chose the option *strongly agree*, and 10 (33.3%) *agreed* with the statement; 5 (16.7%) parents chose the option *neutral*, and none of the participants chose the answers *strongly disagree* or *disagree*.

There was a significant difference in parents' answers across those groups of parents whose children attended Ukrainian Bilingual School and those parents whose children went to Canadian schools,  $t = -2.25$  and  $p = 0.025$ . Those parents whose children attended Ukrainian bilingual school agreed less with the statement that high level of English proficiency facilitated adaptation of their children in the new country, whereby only 2 (20%) out of 10 (100%) parents chose the option *strongly agree*, 5 (50%) parents *agreed* with the statement, and 3 (30%) chose the option *neutral*. In contrast, the parents whose children attended Canadian schools agreed with the statement more often: 13 (80%) out of 20 (100%) respondents chose the option *strongly agree*, 5 (10%) parents *agreed* with the statement, and 2 (10%) chose the option *neutral*.

The Statement 2 “*ESL classes are very helpful for adjustment of my child in Canada*” responses are summarized in Table 3. As Table 3 indicates, out of 30 (100%) parents, 7 (23.3%) chose the option *strongly agree*, and 10 (33.3%) parents chose the option *agree*. Also, 10 (16.7%)

parents chose the option *neutral*, and 2 (6.6%) *disagreed* with the statement. Only 1 (3.4%) respondent *strongly disagreed* with the statement.

There was a significant difference in parents' responses across "shorter-stay" and "longer-stay" groups of parents (i.e., parents whose children stayed in Canada less than three years, and those whose children resided in the country more than three years),  $t = -2.26$  and  $p = 0.024$ . Also, a significant difference was observed in responses to the statement between parents of children with higher and with lower English proficiencies,  $t = -2.54$  and  $p = 0.01$ . The results suggest that ESL classes were helpful for adjustment in Canada for those participating children and youth who had lower level of English proficiency and who moved in Canada recently, rather than for those children and youth who had higher level of English proficiency and lived in Canada longer period of time.

There was a significant difference in answers to the question between parents of children and parents of adolescents,  $t = 2.78$  and  $p = 0.006$ . The analysis shows that ESL classes were more helpful for adjustment in Canada for adolescents than for their younger peers. Additionally, there was a significant difference in parents' responses across the groups of parents whose children attended the ESL classes and those whose children did not have the ESL classes,  $t = 2.72$  and  $p = 0.006$ . As the results, it shows that the ESL classes were helpful for the adjustment of the child and youth in Canada who attended them after immigration.

As for the Statement 3 "*My child first felt frustrated having difficulties with understanding English in his new environment*", participating parents had to respond how much they agreed that their child felt frustrated having difficulties with understanding English after arrival in Canada. As summarized in Table 3.5, out of 30 (100%) respondents, 19 (63.4%) chose the option *agree*, 10 (33.3%) respondents *strongly agreed* with the statement, and 1 (16.7%) participant *disagreed* with the statement.

There was a significant difference in parents' answers across two groups of parents identified according to their children's (adolescents') gender,  $t = 2.2$  and  $p = 0.029$ . Out of 17 (100%) parents of male children, 8 (47%) chose the answer *strongly agree*, where out of 13 (100%) parents of female children (youth) only 2 (15.4%) chose the same answer. According to the parents' answers, the results suggest that male children (adolescents) experienced more frustration and difficulties with understanding English after arrival in Canada rather than their female counterparts.

There was a significant difference in parents' answers to the question between parents of children and parents of adolescents,  $t = -2.480$  and  $p = 0.01$ . The analysis shows that younger children from the first age group (8 to 10 years old) experienced more frustration having difficulties with understanding English after arrival in Canada than the adolescents from second age group (11 to 14 years old).

In the parent's responses for the Statement 4 "*My child had a hard time to find new friends and talk to peers in Canada*", the highest frequency response was the option *strongly agree*, chosen by 14 (40%) of parents, and *agree*, chosen by 9 (30%). Out of 30 (100%) respondents, 3 (10%) chose the option *neutral*, and 6 (20%) parents *disagreed* with the statement. None of the parents *strongly disagreed* with the statement.

There was a significant difference in answers between parents whose children attended Ukrainian Bilingual School and those parents whose children went to Canadian schools,  $t = -2.6$  and  $p = 0.009$ . As summarised in Table 3.5, out of 10 (100%) parents whose child attended Ukrainian bilingual school, 3 (30%) *disagreed* with the statement, and 3 (15%) out of 20 (100%), parents whose child went to Canadian school, chose the same option. In comparison, 2 (20%) parents whose child was enrolled into Ukrainian bilingual school *strongly agreed* with the statement, while 10 (50%) parents whose child went to Canadian school *strongly agreed* that their child had hard time to find new friends and talk to peers in Canada. The analysis shows that those immigrant children (youth) who attended Ukrainian bilingual school had fewer difficulties to find friends and talk to their peers than the immigrant children and youth who were enrolled into Canadian schools.

Also, a significant difference was found in responses between parents of children with higher and lower levels of English proficiency,  $t = -2.12$  and  $p = 0.03$ . It shows that participating children with lower level of English proficiency had more difficulties to find friends and talk to peers in Canada than those who had better English skills.

Among the responses to Statement 5 "*Inability to communicate fluently in English causes adaptation issues for Ukrainian immigrant youth in Canada*", the highest frequency entry was the option *agree*, where 17 (56.7%) parents chose this option. Six (20%) parents *strongly agreed* with the statement, 5 (16.7%) parents chose the option *neutral*, and 2 (6.6%) *disagreed* with the statement. None of the parents *strongly disagreed* with the statement.

There was a significant difference in answers between parents whose children attended Ukrainian Bilingual School and Canadian schools,  $t = -2.597$  and  $p = 0.0094$ . Out of 10 (100%) parents whose child attended Ukrainian bilingual school, none (0%) *strongly agreed* with the statement and 5 chose the option *agree*, whereas out of 20 (100%) parents whose child went to Canadian schools, 6 (30%) respondents *strongly agreed* with the statement and 12 parents chose the option *agree*. The results show that the parents whose children went to Ukrainian bilingual school disagreed more with the statement, and their children had fewer adaptation issues connected with inability to communicate fluently in English than those children who went to Canadian schools.

Significant difference was observed in the answers across parents whose children had better and worse English-speaking skills,  $t = 2.3$  and  $p = 0.02$ . The results suggest that those children (adolescents), who had better speaking skills in English, experienced fewer adaptation issues than those, who had worse speaking skills.

As for the Statement 6 “*Level of English proficiency is directly connected to my child’s wellbeing in Canada*”, 13 (43.3%) parents *strongly agreed* and 10 (33.3%) *agreed* with the statement. Four (13.3%) parents chose the option *neutral*, and 3 (10%) parents chose the option *disagree*. None of the respondents *strongly disagreed* with the statement. During the analysis no significant difference was found between parents’ answers and other parameters.

Statement 7 “*English proficiency influences successful integration into Canadian society*” yielded the following distribution of responses: out of 30 parents, 6 (20%) parents *strongly agreed* with the statement, and 17 (56.7%) parents chose the option *agree*, while only 2 (6.6%) parents chose the option *disagree*, and none of the respondents *strongly disagreed* with the statement.

Significant difference was found in responses between parents of children with higher and lower levels of English proficiency,  $t = -2.480$  and  $p = 0.01$ . The results suggest that those immigrant children (youth) who had higher level of English proficiency could have better chances for integration into Canadian society than those with the worse English skills.

**Table 3.5**  
***English and adaptation***

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
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<b>1. High level of English proficiency facilitates faster adaptation of my child in the new country</b>	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)	5 (16.7 %)	10 (33.3 %)	15 (50 %)	30
<b>2. ESL classes are very helpful for adjustment of my child in Canada</b>	1 (3.4 %)	2 (6.7 %)	10 (33.3 %)	10 (33.3 %)	7 (23.3%)	30
<b>3. My child felt frustrated having difficulties with understanding English after arrival in Canada</b>	0 (0 %)	1 (3.3 %)	0 (0 %)	19 (63.4 %)	10 (33.3 %)	30
<b>4. My child had (has) hard time to find new friends and talk to peers in Canada</b>	0 (0 %)	6 (20 %)	3 (10 %)	9 (30 %)	12 (40 %)	30
<b>5. Inability to communicate fluently in English causes adaptation issues for Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Canada</b>	0 (0 %)	2 (6.6 %)	5 (16.7 %)	17 (56.7 %)	6 (20 %)	30
<b>6. English proficiency is connected to my child's wellbeing in Canada</b>	0 (0 %)	3 (10%)	4 (13.3 %)	10 (33.3 %)	13 (43.3 %)	30
<b>7. High level of English proficiency influences successful integration of my child into Canadian society</b>	0 (0 %)	2 (6.6 %)	5 (16.7 %)	17 (56.7 %)	6 (20 %)	30

As the results show, such parameters as level of English proficiency, ESL classes attendance, and choice of school were related with the Ukrainian immigrant children's and youth's adaptation and integration processes in Canada. In particular, those children who were enrolled into Ukrainian bilingual school had fewer adaptation issues and had fewer difficulties with finding friends than those who went to Canadian schools after relocation to Canada. Also, ESL classes helped children to adjust faster to the new environment, especially for those children who arrived in Canada in older age.

#### **4. DISCUSSION**

The qualitative framework of this study shows that participating Ukrainian immigrant children and youth experience a plethora of challenges connected with the level of English proficiency and adaptation process after relocation to Canada. The main obstacle they encounter is the language barrier, as well as adjustment to the new environment of the host country, new culture, school, and language. The young interviewees express their concerns as for the learning the new language, understanding the new material at school, and establishing social networks upon immigration. Moreover, the quantitative data analysis reveals that such factors as age and gender of the young immigrants, ESL classes attendance, choice of school, and level of English proficiencies are associated with the process of adaptation. However, it is worth to mention that there is a limited number of respondents participated in the study. Thus, the findings of the study can not be generalized for all Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Canada.

The current study points to a number of important issues encountered by Ukrainian immigrant children and youth after immigration effecting their adaptation process. First, the difficulties related to language (English) proficiency appear to be the most pressing ones, which in turn effect adaptation success of the young immigrants. It was found that the biggest issue for the majority of immigrant children and youth is inability to express themselves and communicate in English. The finding is consistent with the previous studies that found that young immigrants faced major challenges upon arrival to a new country connected with limited English proficiency (Chuang, 2010; Jia et al., 2016; Lee & Chen, 2000; Stodolska, 2008). Research identifies the ability to speak a majority language influences the quality of life of the young immigrants, where the immigrant children with better English proficiency have higher self-esteem (Rumbaut, 1994), as well as better chances to establish themselves socio-economically in a new country (Chiswick & Miller, 2007). Furthermore, the study shows that many students experience difficulties finding new friends, understanding cultural peculiarities of the host country, and socializing with their peers. Similarly, previous research shows that immigrant children struggle to adjust to the new environment because of the cultural change and differences between the cultures (Rumbaut, 1994).

Second, immigrant children and youth encounter multiple academic problems such as understanding and grasping the new material. Challenges with the new language (English) including difficulties in the academic arena are identified as the major sources of adjustment constraints for young immigrants (Chow, 1990). Low English proficiency of the immigrant students and exclusive use of English in the classroom environment may negatively influence the young immigrants' understanding of teachers' instructions and academic material taught in the classrooms (Wong-Fillmore, 1982). As a result, the students may not be able to participate in studying process losing their interest in learning and eventually may drop out (Auerbach, 1993). Teachers may discourage students to use their native language for the studying process, since other languages can be considered as an obstacle to acquire the English language, while using English in the classroom is perceived as a standard (Valdes, 1998). However, previous studies show that those students whose first language and culture is valued by schools have better academic progress than those whose language and culture are disregarded (Moll & Diaz, 1993).

The next important finding of the present study reveals that there are a number of factors associated with the immigrant children' and adolescents' second language acquisition and adaptation process in the new country. Age of the young immigrants appears to be among the major factors that have relation to the language acquisition and adjustment of the immigrant children and youth. Multiple studies consistently demonstrate that the children who relocated to a new country in younger age do better in language acquisition and adapt faster to the host society than those who immigrated in older age (Fry, 2007; Stevens, 2015). The results of the current study are in accord with the idea that the children who arrived to Canada in older age have the disadvantages in second language learning and experience more issues during the adaptation. Thus, the time of immigration was important for rates of second language acquisition and adjustment of the immigrant children.

However, age is not the only factor that influences the young immigrants' adjustment process and the language attainment. The results of the present study suggest that the level of English proficiency increases with the duration of time the child spends in the new country. These results are consistent with previous research that states the importance of the length of residence in the host country for the second language attainment (Stevens, 2015). In addition, a positive academic environment and attending ESL classes can improve the rate and quality of the second language acquisition among the young immigrants and contribute to their successful



adaptation. Unlike in the study by Stodolska (2008) that reports unsuccessful experiences of immigrant youth attending ESL classes, the findings of the current study indicate that the majority of the Ukrainian children and adolescents are satisfied with the quality of ESL classes and the knowledge they receive. Portes and Rumbaut (2001) suggest that psychological well-being of immigrant school students is positively influenced by a good learning climate and quality of teaching. Consequently, specially-designed programs for ESL learners can be of great help for the young immigrants' adaptation process in the new country.

The other important factor in relation to the adaptation process is the choice of school. Immigrant children' native culture and language can be often viewed as an obstacle on the child's academic pathway and during the second language acquisition, thus, the idea to disregard the heritage languages and cultures of the immigrant children in the education process is supported (Lee, 2005). However, multiple studies demonstrate that bilingual education with the heritage language of the child contributes to second language acquisition having a positive effect on the adaptation process of the young immigrants (Bialystok, 2016; Lindholm-Leary, 2001). The results of the present study indicate that bilingual education positively influences adjustment process of the young Ukrainian immigrants, where the Ukrainian immigrant children and adolescents experience fewer issues with the language barrier, academic process, and socialization with peers than those who attend the mainstream English schools. Zhou and Bankston (1994) argue that immigrant children who are members of their ethnic minority groups had advantages in the adaptation process. Furthermore, previous research shows that bilingual education positively influences academic achievement, cognitive abilities, and self-esteem of the young immigrants (Golash-Boza, 2005). Therefore, bilingual education can be a good practice for the immigrant children and youth in terms of smooth transition into the new environment upon immigration, where the young immigrants can socialize with the children of the same background and practice their own language acquiring the majority language interchangeably.

Finally, the results of the study underscore an important role of the level of English proficiency at arrival in the adaptation process of the young immigrants. Limited English proficiency can be associated with academic, psychological, and social problems experienced by the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth. Limited English proficiency in the school environment presents multiple difficulties for the immigrant children, where the young

immigrants face such challenges as inability to fully participate in a schooling process and understand the content material. More than that, some students need to spend four to seven years to acquire appropriate level of academic English (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). Consequently, students entering school with limited English proficiency are most likely at risk for school failure among of all students (August & Hakuta, 1997). In addition, the results of the present study indicate that low level of language proficiency at arrival negatively influences peer relationship and establishment of the new social networks, which is consistent with the previous research by Stodolska (2008). Thus, language proficiency and communicative competence are the important components of sociocultural adaptation (Masgoret & Ward, 2006).

Immigrant children and youth want to master English faster to achieve success when arriving to a new country and adjusting to a new culture (Berry, 2003a). Therefore, a possible explanation for the current finding of a connection between level of English proficiency and adaptation can be that immigrant children and youth want to understand what they hear around and actively participate in the process of communication with others in English. It may be an additional motivation to immerse themselves in the mainstream society. This desire to understand others and the motivation help immigrant children and youth fulfil communicative needs such as interacting with peers from the mainstream culture, expressing their ideas and sharing opinions, and participating in different kinds of activities. If the English proficiency is limited, the child may experience more difficulties when unable to satisfy his or her communication needs in full extent and socialize with the members of the host country. Thus, language proficiency in the host country is one of the factors that predicts the immigrant children' and youth' adaptation difficulties. When assessing the young immigrants' quality of adjustment in the host country, special attention should be directed at the level of language proficiency of the young immigrants and the ways to overcome the language barrier faster during the adaptation in the new country.

Taking into consideration the results of the present study, the following recommendations for counseling and preparing the young immigrants to adapt successfully in a new country can be employed for future practices. The first suggestion is to introduce a special training before and after arrival for the young immigrants. Establishing some "welcome centres" in a host country can be a helpful practice for the immigrant children and youth where they can be informed of the cultural peculiarities of the host country, educational system, and social structure at the initial stages of their life after relocation. Our findings indicate that special attention should be paid to

the level of English proficiency of the young immigrants and the quality of the educational programs at schools. The counselors and educators have to consider the special language needs of the children and youth, their personal characteristics, and cultural backgrounds and find unique approaches for the training of young immigrants.

To conclude, the present study offers insights into the major English proficiency and adaptation issues of the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth upon relocation to Canada. In particular, the findings describe the possible difficulties and factors connected with the adaptation process of the young immigrants. Moreover, the present study is among the few to be focused on the language proficiency issues and adaptation experiences of the immigrant children and youth from Ukraine in Canada.

#### **4.1 Limitations of the study**

The following limitations should be taken into consideration while interpreting the results of the current study. The major limitation of the study is the small sample size. In general, small sample sizes are typical to the studies that have the interpretive paradigm and do not intend to generalize the findings. This research is exploratory and aims to provide in-depth information as for the English proficiency and adaptation issues among Ukrainian immigrant children and youth. Since the study summarizes the experiences of 30 young Ukrainian immigrants in Saskatchewan and the number of participants is limited, the exploratory framework of this study is not intended to claim generalizability in the English proficiency and adaptation issues among Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan. Consequently, the findings may be idiosyncratic to this group of participants.

The study makes meaningful contribution with possibility for future research in the area of Ukrainian immigration and second language acquisition. Additionally, the fact that most of the participants were recruited in the city of Saskatoon, the generalizability of the findings to immigrant children and youth in other areas can be speculative in this case. There is a need to expand investigation in this area of research and to recruit more participants from varied locations.

Second, regression analysis is used to identify whether a particular parameter may be a predictor for another one but does not allow to predict whether the level of English proficiency may influence the process of adaptation. In this case, factor analysis is often used to identify such

an influence. However, it was impossible to conduct such a statistical procedure as factor analysis because of the relatively small sample size in this study.

Lastly, future research can be strengthened if empirically validated measures (Berry, 1997; Ward, 2001) are incorporated, as many adaptation variables are not tested in the present research. Moreover, it was impossible to measure the initial level of English proficiency of the young immigrants after arrival to Canada and find the causal relation between the level of language proficiency and adaptation. There is a need for further research to investigate this relationship longitudinally.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the current study contributes to a literature on issues regarding level of language proficiency and adaptation process. The findings of the main issues faced by Ukrainian immigrant children and youth and relation between different variables increase better understanding of the language proficiency and adaptation problems among the young immigrants.

## **4.2 Conclusion**

The present study provides an overview of the major linguistic and adaptation difficulties experienced by the Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan. The main objective of this exploratory study is to describe and analyze English proficiency and adjustment issues faced by the young immigrants. The results indicate that the young Ukrainian immigrants are among the potentially vulnerable population in Canada. The Ukrainian immigrant children and youth are found to be not prepared for the challenges occurred after relocation to a new country. As a result, their limited English proficiency is one of the pressing issues during the adaptation process. Also, such factors as age, gender, choice of school, ESL classes attendance influence the process of second language acquisition and adaptation of the children and youth. However, it should be emphasized that the study has a small sample size that does not allow to generalize the findings for all Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan or anywhere else. It is worth to mention that further research is needed to expand a scope of the study to larger samples and more ethnic groups of immigrant children and youth, and employ empirically sound measures for assessment of different linguistic and adaptation variables.

Furthermore, the study is focused on identifying the factors that contribute to the young Ukrainian immigrants' adaptation, understanding of their needs, and the kinds of assistance they

require in overcoming their linguistic and adaptation barriers. The study shows that the young Ukrainian immigrants' linguistic readiness and adjustment difficulties deserve special attention of educators, parents, counselors, social workers, etc.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Questionnaire for parents

#### A) Background information

**How old is your child?**

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**Gender of your child?**

-----

**What grade is s/he in?**

-----

**How long has your child been living  
in Canada? -----**

**What is your occupation right  
now? -----**

**What was your occupation in  
Ukraine? -----**

**What is your highest level of  
education? -----**

-----

**B) English proficiency**

**1. What language does your child speak at home? ☐ Ukrainian ☐ English ☐ Other**

**2. Estimate the English proficiency of your child (check everything that applies):**

**a) Your child can speak English:**

☐ like a native speaker ☐ very well ☐ well enough ☐ poorly ☐ not at all

**b) Your child can write in English:**

☐ like a native speaker ☐ very well ☐ well enough ☐ poorly ☐ not at all

**c) Your child can understand English:**

☐ like a native speaker ☐ very well ☐ well enough ☐ poorly ☐ not at all

**d) Your child can read in English:**

☐ like a native speaker ☐ very well ☐ well enough ☐ poorly ☐ not at all

**3. Has your child ever attended ESL classes? ☐ Yes ☐ No**

**4. Why or why not have you decided to sign your child up for ESL classes?**

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**5. What school does your child attend (French immersion/catholic, public, Ukrainian Bilingual, etc.)?**

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**6. Please explain the choice of the school for your child?**

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**C) English proficiency and adaptation**

**1. How important is English for your child for the following:**

**a) Be accepted to the Canadian society: ☐ Crucial ☐ Very important**

☐ Moderately important ☐ Slightly important ☐ Unimportant

- b) For good performance at school: ☐ Crucial ☐ Very important  
☐ Moderately important ☐ Slightly important ☐ Unimportant
- c) Become successful in his/her future career: ☐ Crucial ☐ Very important  
☐ Moderately important ☐ Slightly important ☐ Unimportant
- d) Communicate with friends: ☐ Crucial ☐ Very important  
☐ Moderately important ☐ Slightly important ☐ Unimportant

2. Because of his/her level of English proficiency does your child experience any difficulties with:

- a) Finding friends: ☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always
- b) Understanding teachers' instructions: ☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always
- c) Performance at school: ☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always
- d) Understanding Canadian culture: ☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always
- e) Attending extracurricular activities: ☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always
- f) Being understood by his/her peers: ☐ Never ☐ Sometimes ☐ Often ☐ Always

3. Here are some statements about English proficiency and adaptation in Canada.

Please check which of the following you agree or disagree with:

Statements	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. High level of English proficiency facilitates faster adaptation of my child in a new country					
2. ESL classes are very helpful for adjustment of my child in Canada					
3. My child first felt frustrated having difficulties with understanding English in his new environment					
4. My child had a hard time to find new friends and talk to peers in Canada					

<b>5. Inability to communicate fluently in English causes adaptation issues for Ukrainian immigrant youth in Canada</b>					
<b>6. Level of English proficiency is directly connected to my child's wellbeing in Canada</b>					
<b>7. English proficiency influences successful integration into Canadian society</b>					

### **Additional questions**

**1. What did you do to help your child to improve his/her English skills?**

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**2. Have you observed any changes in your child's life connected to the improvement of his/her English proficiency level?**

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**3. What kind of adaptation difficulties has your child experienced since you arrived in Canada?**

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- 4. Does your child feel challenged or stressed as a foreign language speaker in Canada?  
In what way?**

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- 5. In your opinion, what measures have to be taken to contribute to successful  
adaptation of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Canada?**

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## **Appendix B: Interview schedule for children**

### ***Personal Information:***

1. How old are you? 2. What grade are you in?
3. How long have you been living in Canada?

### ***Adaptation difficulties***

1. Did you want to leave Ukraine and move to Canada? Please explain why/why not?
2. How did you imagine the life in Canada before moving here? Were your expectations met when you arrived here?
3. Please tell me about the main difficulties you experienced arriving to Canada.
4. Did you have any difficulties with English?

Please tell me more about some specific situations when you experienced difficulties with English usage.

### ***English proficiency and its peculiarities***

5. Have you ever attended the ESL classes? Were they helpful? In what way?
6. What aspect(s) of English (reading, writing, speaking, or listening) were the most difficult for you?
7. How about now? What are you doing or did to improve your level of English proficiency?
8. What is specific motivation to speak fluent English for you here?  
Please tell me why you think so?
9. Is there anything that has changed since you have started to communicate better in English?

### ***Language and adaptation***

10. How many English-speaking friends do you have right now?  
Do you have any difficulties to communicate with them?
11. How many Ukrainian and Russian-speaking friends do you have? What language do you speak with your Ukrainian (Russian) friends?
12. What language do you speak with your parents?
13. When watching TV, do you choose Ukrainian or English channels?  
Please explain your choice.
14. Do you think speaking better English would facilitate adaptation to life in Canada?  
Please tell me why you think so?

## **Appendix C: Interview Schedule with a Teacher**

### **Background information:**

1. How old are you?
2. Gender:
3. What is your highest level of education?
4. What is your native language(s)?
5. What other languages are you fluent in?
6. What was your occupation in Ukraine?

### **Questions about ESL teaching:**

1. How long have you been teaching (ESL) in Saskatchewan?
2. Have you taught (ESL) in other parts of Canada?
3. Have you lived abroad for more than 6 months? If yes. Where?
4. Have you taught (ESL) anywhere abroad? If yes. Where?
5. Where do you teach (ESL) in Saskatchewan (which organization)?
6. Do you ever communicate with children's parents?
7. If you teach (ESL) at school, do you have opportunities to observe children's/youth's progress in other subjects?
8. If you teach ESL at school, do you have opportunities to observe children's/youth's progress in their social adaptation?
9. If yes, how old are the children/youth? What grade are they in?
10. Have you had experience teaching (ESL to) Ukrainian children/youth?
11. If yes, how long have you been teaching Ukrainian children/youth?
12. If yes, how old are they? What grade are they in?
13. What is the regular size of your (ESL) class, and how many of the students in it are from Ukraine?
14. Have you noticed any specific challenges faced by Ukrainian children or youth in (ESL) classes?
15. In general, what level of English proficiency do Ukrainian immigrant children and youth have coming from Ukraine (according to their age)?
16. What aspects of English (reading, speaking, listening, writing) present most difficulties for Ukrainian immigrant children or youth?
17. Do Ukrainian immigrant children have problems with English grammar (grammar differences between English and Ukraine)? In what way?
18. Have you noticed any specific difficulties Ukrainian immigrant children and youth may experience with a new educational system?
19. In your opinion, how does the level of English proficiency influence the child's performance at the school?
20. In general, how long does it take for a child to catch up and adjust to the program at the school?
21. Overall, are the ESL classes helpful for the child's adjustment to the new environment. In what way?
22. In your opinion, do Ukrainian immigrant children and youth have any problems to understand the content of math, science, and social subjects during their classes?
23. Are there any differences in overall performance of Ukrainian and Canadian (other nationalities) children due to the level of English proficiency?



24. Have you noticed any changes in social life of Ukrainian immigrant children at the school as their English skills improve?
25. If you had opportunities to observe, what measures are generally taken to accommodate the child at the school and to ensure his/her smooth transition and adaptation to the new school environment

## Appendix D: Listening Test

### Questions Part 1

**1. Dogs are man's ..... friend.**

- Better
- Best
- Good

**2. A cat may one day ..... the house.**

- Leave
- Stay in
- Forget

**3. Dogs guard the house from ..... .**

- Friends
- People
- Thieves

**4. They can bring you your ..... .**

- Supper
- Slippers
- Blanket

**5. Dogs ..... tell lies.**

- Never
- Always
- Often

**6. Touching them is ..... .**

- Relaxing
- Stress
- Dangerous

**7. When people see you with a dog, they often ..... to you.**

- Listen
- Speak
- Come

## **Part 2**

**8. Dogs help people and can stay with people.**

- True
- False

**9. Cats are man's best friend.**

- True
- False

**10. A dog can always stay with you, even when your friends may forget you.**

- True
- False

**11. People with dogs may live a short life.**

- True
- False

**12. Dogs are the best cure for stress.**

- True
- False

**13. Friendship with dogs makes people strong.**

- True
- False

**14. People ran away from you, when they see you with a dog.**

- True
- False

## Appendix E: Speaking Test



## **Appendix F: Consent Form for Parents**

### **CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS**

**Research Supervisor: Veronika Makarova**, PhD, Professor, Department Head of Linguistics at the University of Saskatchewan, e-mail: v.makarova@usask.ca

**Student Researcher: Kateryna Bryzh**, Department of Linguistics and Religious Studies; University of Saskatchewan, phone: 881-2379, e-mail: kab038@mail.usask.ca

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “English language proficiency and adaptation issues among Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan”. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

This is a study of the level of English language proficiency and adaptation issues of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan. The study will help us to understand the adaptation process of Ukrainian youth connected to the level of English proficiency in Saskatchewan and to find out whether the adjustment to a new country can be made easier for immigrant youth from Ukraine.

You will be asked to complete questionnaire about the use of English in your child’s everyday life. The questionnaire will take about 10 to 15 minutes to answer. Your child will be interviewed of possible adaptation issues that might be connected with the level of English proficiency. The interview will take about 15 to 20 minutes. Your child will be given a standardized English proficiency test in order to define his/her current level of English proficiency that will take about 20 to 30 minutes of your child’s time.

Each interview will be digitally recorded, and a verbatim transcript will be prepared by the student researcher. You and your child will be informed at the conclusion of the interview that the interview transcript will be given to your child under your supervision so that it can be reviewed and that your child can make corrections if necessary or desired under your supervision. Each interview transcript will be compared to the digital interview recording by the student researcher, before being delivered to the interviewee with an invitation to "review it and make any corrections." Your child will be asked to return any comments or feedback on their transcripts under your supervision. All edits, additions and omissions made to the interview transcript will be documented.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You or your child may request to turn off the recorder at any time, and all the data will be deleted. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data has been pooled. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred, and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

The data will be collected confidentially. Neither your name nor your child’s name will appear in any form in research materials and publications. All the research materials including questionnaires and audio records will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan and not released to any individuals or organizations. Data will be stored by the research supervisor for a minimum of 5 years after the completion of the study.

The data collected will be reported in research papers and academic presentations, mostly in aggregate form. Direct quotations from your questionnaire and your child’s interview may be published or used in teaching materials for academic courses on campus, but no personally identifying information will ever be released.

If you have any questions concerning this study, please do not hesitate to ask. You may also contact the researchers at the contact information provided if you have questions at a later date. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office: [ethics.office@usask.ca](mailto:ethics.office@usask.ca); (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign below. If you would like to find out about the results of research, please check the box below. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

☐ I would like to have a copy of research results.

I have read and understood the description provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described, understanding that I may withdraw this consent until the data has been pooled. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix G: Consent form for Teachers

### CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

**Research Supervisor:** Veronika Makarova, PhD, Professor, Department Head of Linguistics at the University of Saskatchewan, e-mail: v.makarova@usask.ca

**Student Researcher:** Kateryna Bryzh, Department of Linguistics and Religious Studies; University of Saskatchewan, phone: 881-2379, e-mail: kab038@mail.usask.ca

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled “English language proficiency and adaptation issues among Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan”. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask any questions you might have.

This is a study of the level of English language proficiency and adaptation issues of Ukrainian immigrant youth in Saskatchewan. The study will help us to understand the adaptation process of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth connected to the level of English proficiency in Saskatchewan and to find out whether the adjustment to a new country can be made easier for immigrant children and youth from Ukraine.

You will be interviewed of possible adaptation issues that might be connected with the level of English proficiency of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth. The interview will take about 30 minutes. The interview will be digitally recorded and a verbatim transcript will be prepared by the student researcher. You will be informed at the conclusion of the interview that the interview transcript will be given to you that it can be reviewed and that you can make corrections if necessary. Each interview transcript will be compared to the digital interview recording by the student researcher, before being delivered to the interviewee with an invitation to "review it and make any corrections." All edits, additions and omissions made to the interview transcript will be documented.

Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you are comfortable with. You may request to turn off the recorder at any time, and all the data will be deleted. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, without explanation or penalty of any sort. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until data has been pooled. After this it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your data.

The data will be collected confidentially. Your name will not appear in any form in research materials and publications. All the research materials including audio records will be stored at the University of Saskatchewan and not released to any individuals or organizations. Data will be stored by the research supervisor for a minimum of 5 years after the completion of the study.

The data collected will be reported in research papers and academic presentations, mostly in aggregate form. Direct quotations from the interview may be published or used in teaching materials for academic courses on campus, but no personally identifying information will ever be released.

If you have any questions concerning this study, please do not hesitate to ask. You may also contact the researchers at the contact information provided if you have questions at later date. This research project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office: ethics.office@usask.ca; (306) 966-2975. Out of town participants may call toll free (888) 966-2975.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign below. If you would like to find out about the results of research, please check the box below. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

☐ I would like to have a copy of research results.

I have read and understood the description provided above. I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described, understanding that I may withdraw this consent until the data has been pooled. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

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Name of Participant

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Signature

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date



## Appendix H: Assent Form

### ASSENT FORM

Dear friend,

You are invited to take part in a research project. In a research project, people study something new and exciting. I study what kind of difficulties with a new language and adaptation immigrant children have, and request you to help us, if you are willing to do so. This is not a part of your regular class work. This is an optional activity.

If you agree, I will give an English test for you to pass and ask a few questions about your adaptation process in Canada. I will record what you say. It will probably take about 15 to 30 minutes to do this.

If you get tired, or bored, or you think that this is not interesting, you can stop at any time. If you stop, this will not cause anyone to be upset or angry and will not result in any type of penalty.

I will not share your results and story with anybody.

If you later change your mind, and you do not want us to listen to your story or pass the test, you can call the telephone number below and tell us. I will then erase the recording and destroy your test. You can also call us if you have any questions.

Kateryna Bryzh

I study at the University of Saskatchewan.

You can call me at 3062901743, or e-mail [brizh.ekaterina@mail.ru](mailto:brizh.ekaterina@mail.ru). If you read this explanation or listened to it, if you understand it and agree to take part in the study, please write your name on the line which says 'YOUR NAME'.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of participating child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
YOUR NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of researcher

UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN  
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND RELIGIOUS  
STUDIES

# join our project

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND ADAPTATION  
ISSUES AMONG UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANT CHILDREN  
AND YOUTH IN SASKATCHEWAN

Help us study English proficiency adaptation issues of Ukrainian immigrant children and youth in Saskatchewan. Share your story and make a contribution to help future Ukrainian immigrant children and youth to adapt to life in Canada more easily.

If you are a Ukrainian family with children between **8 and 14 years** of age and you arrived in Saskatchewan within the last 3 years, or you moved here more than 3 years ago,



Contact Kateryna Bryzh  
[kab038@mail.usask.ca](mailto:kab038@mail.usask.ca)  
or 306-290-17-43 for  
details. Your  
participation in this  
project would be of great  
help.